RT
F

Frend, William
Animadversions on the
Elements of Christian
theology.

RT
F

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/animadversionson00frenuoft

RT
F

ANIMADVERSIONS

ON THE

ELEMENTS

OF

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

BY THE REVEREND

(Sir) *GEORGE PRETYMAN, D.D. F.R.S.*

LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN;

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS ADDRESSED TO HIS LORDSHIP

BY

WILLIAM FREND.

47935 9
28.9.48

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

AND SOLD BY RIDGEWAY, YORK-STREET, ST. JAMES'S-SQUARE; AND DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE.

1800.

Printed by S. Hamilton, Falcon-Court, Fleet-Street.

Price Three Shillings.

BOOKS PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.

The principles of algebra. 1st part.

The principles of algebra. Part the second. Or the true theory of equations established on mathematical demonstration, by William Frend. Robinsons, Paternoster-row; White, Fleet-street; Ridgeway, York-street; Deighton, Cambridge.

Appendix to the above principles of algebra, by Francis Maseres, esq. cursitor-baron of his majesty's court of exchequer. Robinsons, Paternoster-row; White, Fleet-street; Deighton, Cambridge.

A letter to the vice-chanceller of the university of Cambridge, by William Frend, candidate for the lucasian professership. White, Fleet-street; Deighton and Flower, Cambridge.

Principles of taxation, by William Frend. Ridgeway, York-street, St. James's-square.

LETTERS

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

Reasons for writing—shameful system of two divines reprobated—the bishop's opinion of subscription to the thirty-nine articles—the writer's excuse for abstaining from long quotations.

MY LORD,

ON hearing that your lordship had published an elementary work on theology, my curiosity was excited to discover the progress, which had been made within the last hundred years, in that much neglected science; and to learn, from good authority, what are the present doctrines of the church of England. Your work gratified me in both respects; and I should have contented myself with the pleasure derived from the first perusal, if a singularity in the conclusion had not forcibly attracted my attention, and

led me into a farther investigation of your lordship's principles. You stand forward the decided advocate of truth—the pernicious system which, with shameless effrontery, has been promulgated by two doctors of the church of England, receives no countenance from your lordship—you require of persons who dedicate themselves to the office of teaching, that they should really believe, what, in your lordship's presence, they have subscribed. You do not admit the specious glosses and jesuitical pretences, by which these divines palliate the most notorious frauds, and would make the church of England an asylum for the credulous and the incredulous, the pious and the impious, the active searcher after truth and the rapacious hunter after preferment. I honour you, my lord, for your decision. May it produce the desired effect on your brethren on the bench! May it dissipate a system founded on a flagrant abuse of talents, and calculated to produce a total neglect of moral duty in the clergy, and an entire distrust of them among the laity!

In opposition to these divines, your lordship justly asserts, "that the clergy should unfeignedly believe the truth of the doctrines "contained in the thirty-nine articles*;" and, that "it behoves every one, before he offers

* Vol I. p. 566.

" himself a candidate for holy orders, to peruse " carefully the articles of the church, and to " compare them with the written word of " god. If upon mature examination," your lordship adds, "he believes them to be au- " thorised by scripture, he may conscientiously " subscribe them; but if, on the contrary, he " thinks, that he sees reason to dissent from " any of the doctrines asserted in them, no " hope of emolument or honour, no dread of " inconvenience or disappointment should in- " duce him to express his solemn assent to pro- " positions, which, in fact, he does not be- " lieve *." Such language is worthy of the overseer of any church; and your lordship's farther exhortation deserves to be recorded. " Let it be remembered, that in a business of " this serious and important nature no species " whatever of evasion, subterfuge, or reserve is " to be allowed, or can be practised without " imminent danger of incurring the wrath of " god. The articles are to be subscribed in " their plain and obvious sense; and assent is " to be given to them simply and unequivo- " cally. Thus only can a person offer himself " at the table of the lord, as his minister, with " safety: thus only can he expect to receive " the divine blessing upon that course of life, to " which he has solemnly devoted himself †."

* Vol. II. p. 567. † Ib. p. 568.

These extracts, according entirely with my own sentiments, I have copied witn great pleasure; and, in the future letters, which I shall have the honour of addressing to your lordship, my eye will be continually directed to them, that, if any thing should be found in your interpretation of the articles to be not consistent with the forms laid down for subscription, I may give your lordship the opportunity of farther examination; and your lordship's condescension in declaring, that you "shall very "readily attend to any suggestion or advice, "whether it relates to errour or omission *," induces me to hope, that you will not be displeased at this intrusion on your time, and interesting avocations. I must premise only, that it is not in my power to imitate your lordship in referring to and making copious extracts from a variety of writers: my scanty library does not contain those valuable writings in which my time was once so agreeably and, I thought, usefully employed: your lordship's work, and my old friends Trommius, Schmidt, Griesbach's greek testament, and Leusden's hebrew bible, are the only works, to which I shall have recourse, unless perchance I should, in a friend's library, be enabled to cast my eye on some of the works quoted in the margin of your elements of theology. Of this defect I do not, in this instance,

* Vol. I. p. xii.

complain very bitterly; as every position, in which we agree or differ, must be brought to the test of scripture, and cannot be determined by any other authority. With great respect I beg leave to subscribe myself,

My lord,

Your lordship's

affectionate brother in Christ,

WILLIAM FREND.

INNER TEMPLE,
Jan. 1. 1800.

LETTER II.

Vulgar prejudices on christening—disputes on baptism—fashionable folly of the members of the church—difficulties on the subject—bishop's solution of them—examined by scripture—bishop's interpretation of a greek word—baptism can be performed only by dipping.

MY LORD,

A CEREMONY was performed on us both when very young, by which we were supposed to become christians; and from this strange idea the word christening took its rise in our language. To myself, the actions of my nurse are of little importance; and having surmounted vulgar prejudices on this subject, I may, perhaps, be capable of forming a more impartial judgement on the disputes relative to baptism than your lordship, who cannot be expected to enter fully into this wide field of discussion, by which your episcopal ordination might be endangered.

The disputes on baptism may be referred to two general heads: the first, on the meaning of the

the term; the second, on the extent of the command by which the ceremony is ordained.

On the meaning of the word two opinions divide the christian world. By the one baptism is supposed to mean dipping, by the other it is made to signify washing or sprinkling. They who receive the word in the first sense initiate persons into their society by dipping them into water, so as to cover them entirely with it. This has been the custom with the jews from the earliest times—it was the custom with John, who from this very act is called in scripture the baptist or dipper—our saviour was dipped in this manner—his apostles dipped their disciples in the same manner—the greek church and all in communion with it have practised dipping from the time of Christ to the present day—for many centuries the practice of dipping was general in the church of Rome—the church of England directed at one time its ministers "to dip the child in water thrice*," and dipping is still prescibed in the common-prayer book—and lastly a considerable body of seceders from the churches of Rome, England, Scotland, &c. have made dipping the peculiar mark of their separation, and with great propriety assumed to themselves the name of baptists or dippers.

* Vol. II. p. 456.

The other opinion is, that the word baptism in the original scripture may be rendered washing or sprinkling, and agreeably to this opinion the churches of Rome, England and Scotland, the Lutheran and the Calvinistical churches, make sprinkling instead of dipping the mode of introducing members into their respective societies.

The majority of christians in Europe and America adhere to the latter opinion: they sprinkle, and do not dip. The majority of christians in Asia and Africa retain the ancient custom: they dip, and do not sprinkle.

There are few subjects in which the blindness of fashion is more observable than in the dispute on these two modes of interpreting a word. I have frequently been in company with members of the church of England, when the conversation has been led by the circumstance of a baptism or a sermon by a baptist preacher in the neighbourhood, and their ceremony of dipping people under water on professing christianity has been made the object of scorn and derision. In vain did I observe, that our saviour himself was dipped in this manner, and that the great body of christians from his time have followed his example. Such arguments were of no avail: sprinkling is the custom at church—the whole company had been sprinkled at church

—and who but low people would submit to so vulgar and indecent a custom as going under water in the sight of a multitude. You and I, my lord, can pity this fashionable ignorance. We mutually lament, that so many of our fellow-creatures take up opinions merely from habit, and the prejudices of birth and education—we see in these persons the seeds of that disposition which led the jews to reject our saviour, and now in a similar manner operates in so many to disgrace his religion.

How then, my lord, is a real searcher after truth to guide himself in this inquiry? The custom of the few for several centuries cannot, as far as custom only is the argument, be maintained against the practice of the many for nearly eighteen hundred years: and it is the more remarkable in this case, that the nations which retain the ancient mode of dipping are in communion with that church, in whose language the gospels were originally written. If the romish church had retained dipping, and the greek church had adopted sprinkling, there might be some reason for imputing these different practices to an ambiguity in the language; but, since the greeks have always retained the custom of dipping, and to this day use the same word in the same sense, the grounds for imagining that it can be used in another sense ought

to be stated in the clearest manner, and the new sense should not be adopted by any one but under the clearest conviction of its propriety. I may add, that all the metaphors in the new testament, and there are several, alluding to baptism, all coincide in giving the same sense to the word and applying it only to the dipping or sinking under water.

You, my lord, have attempted to solve the difficulties upon this subject in a manner which may be considered as a proof of your lordship's candour, and the necessity of reading greek is at once superseded. It is of little consequence, in your lordship's estimation, how the rite is performed; for "no particular direction "being given in scripture," your lordship asserts, "concerning the manner in which water "is to be applied in baptism, we may allow "immersion, affusion, or aspersion, and, whe-"ther it be performed three times or once, to be "equally valid*." In this passage you have, I fear, my lord, doubly committed yourself. First, you will find it difficult to maintain your general position; and secondly, if that position is overthrown, we shall not be able, I apprehend, to establish the validity of our infantine christenings.

* Vol. II. 457.

There is no particular direction in scripture, your lordship asserts, on the mode of applying water in baptism, and you might have added, that in the precept of our saviour relating to baptism, water is even not mentioned. But what! does not our saviour give a specific direction, when he says, Go, teach all nations, baptising them*: and in another place, He who believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved †: and, was not the apostle understood, when he said, Let every one of you be baptised upon the name of Christ ‡. Is it likely that at one place they should go into the river, at another place wash, at another sprinkle their faces with water, or sand, or wine, or blood? Before we can allow your lordship's position, it must be proved, that the word, to baptise, was used in scripture in these different senses, that it meant at one time to immerse, at another time to affuse, at another time to sprinkle. On the contrary, if the word to baptise meant only to dip, if it had always been understood in this sense, if dipping had been the constant practice, then our saviour's words are as explicit as possible, and a particular direction is given for the use of water. Go, teach all nations, dipping them—He, who believeth and is dipped, shall be saved—Let every one of you be dipped upon the name of Christ.

* Mat. xxviii. 19. † Mark xvi. 16. ‡ Acts ii. 38.

The question then is reduced into a narrow compass: What is the real meaning of the greek word used upon this occasion? Your lordship answers in the following terms: "Baptism is derived "from the greek word *bapto*, which signifies to wash." If this were really the case, since I acknowledge the propriety of the derivation, your lordship's point would be established; but it is singular that this word *bapto* should be used in scripture in a directly contrary sense, and, that the established translaters of the testament should oppose your lordship's interpretation. Your lordship will find the word in Luke, xvi. 24. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger:—in John, xiii. 26. He it is, for whom I shall, after dipping the morsel, give it:—in Rev. xix. 13. Cloathed in a garment died in blood. The real fact is, my lord, that the word *bapto* never can be twisted to any other sense besides dipping, and that all writers, sacred and profane, from the time of Homer to that of Longinus, concur in opposing your lordship's interpretation. Nay, my lord, you would see, I am persuaded, the impropriety of your conjecture, on giving yourself the trouble of substituting the idea of washing instead of dipping, whenever *bapto* or its derivatives occur in the new testament.

According to my view, then, of the subject, our saviour gave a peculiar direction to his

apostles, when he ordered them to teach and baptise the heathen; and his direction was, to teach them first, and then to dip them for the name of the father, the son, and the holy spirit: and, if any society chooses to admit members by sprinkling their faces with water, this may be an innocent or a useful rite, but I cannot allow it to be the baptism ordained by Christ, and practised by his apostles.

I remain, &c.

LETTER III.

Christians divided on the extent of the baptismal precept—its perpetuity maintained by a very great majority on two specious arguments—grounds for the rite among jews and christians—the end of the world in the baptismal precept, a mistranslation.—advantages from our ignorance in the history of the apostolical and following age.—reasons for the cessation of baptism with the apostolical age.—baptists worthy of great respect.

MY LORD,

WE have not, it seems, by the preceding letter, either of us been baptised; and, you may fairly ask me, whether I do not mean to take the first opportunity of complying with my saviour's injunctions. It is my duty, without doubt, to comply with his injunctions, but I must first be convinced, that the baptism of modern christians is among those injunctions: and this brings me to consider the extent of his command. On one part of the command, the christian world is, we have seen, by no means agreed: on the other part, there is also a division; yet, if truth could be determined by numbers, the disparity in this part of the argument

is so great, that it would seem almost presumptuous to call the subject againin to discussion. Your lordship, however, by choosing the side of the minority on one part of the command, evidently denies, that numbers form the criterion of truth, and a farther examination of the subject may, perhaps, induce your lordship to add the sanction of your name to a still smaller minority.

The great body of christians has with very few exceptions maintained in every age the perpetuity of baptism, and they seem to have been biassed by two specious arguments. First, baptism is as necessary in every age as at the time of our saviour. Secondly, Christ has commanded, that the rite shall exist to the end of the world. We will first examine the necessity of baptism in any age.

Baptism was a ceremony with the jews, by which they were cleansed from certain legal impurities, and rendered capable of approaching to and paying their religious homage at the altar of god. Compared with the jews, all the heathens were impure; and, if any one, sensible of his errours and his impurities became a convert to the jewish worship, baptism was the ceremony previous to his initiation. John the baptist, or dipper, came to prepare men for a

new dispensation, and they, who heard his call, acknowledging their impurities and the necessity of repentance, were by him initiated into the new dispensation. On the conversion of the heathen to the christian religion their former impure life was acknowledged, and they were by baptism initiated into a purer mode of life and worship. From being an unholy and impure race they became holy and pure. The heathen, who was introduced into the congregation of the jews, became holy like his new brethren, and there was no subsequent baptism to initiate his now holy offspring into the father's religion. They were all born holy in the holy religion, and if the first fruits were holy, so were the branches. In the same manner the apostles, on converting any individuals among the heathen, purified them from the impure mass by baptism: they were set apart as a peculiar people; and their offspring required no new purification, since they were not born, like their fathers, in impurity. As others of the heathen came over to the newly-formed people, baptism was used exactly in the same manner as it had been used, when a heathen came over to the jewish religion. If this is a true state of the case, there is no necessity for baptising the son of christian parents, and we shall find it consistent with the true explanation of the precept.

The precept is: Go make disciples of all the heathen, baptising them into the name of the father, the son, and the holy spirit. The apostles went, and made disciples, who formed themselves into societies throughout the whole extent of the roman empire, and the many tokens of heavenly interference in their progress verified our saviour's prediction, I will be with you daily to the completion of the age. The vulgar translation renders part of this passage, " to the " end of the world," but I need not point out to your lordship, that the word mistranslated world belongs to time not to matter, and has a reference to the two great ages, the ends of which were approaching when our saviour spoke. The age spoken of by our saviour was the age of the mosaical dispensation, on whose completion commenced the christian age; the age in which we are now living; and, as it has seen the rise, it will probably soon be a witness to the fall of the two great apostasies from the christian religion, popery, and mahometism. From the time, when our saviour spoke, to the completion of the age, was a period of forty years, in which the great conversion of the heathen was accomplished, and with it expired the miraculous powers communicated to the teachers of christianity.

But how came it to pass, it may be asked,

that christians continued the practice of baptism beyond this period, and even baptised the children of christian parents? I answer, from misunderstanding the nature of baptism, as they did many other things in the christian dispensation: and, if even in the apostolical age the apostles themselves could not without great difficulty overcome the prejudices of their birth, we are not to be surprised at any subsequent race of christians adhering to some erroneous interpretation of scripture *. And here, my lord, I cannot help expressing my admiration of the œconomy of providence in the propagation of christianity. We know very little of the history of the early christians for the first hundred years after the death of Christ, and, much as the deficiency of records may be lamented by the historian, I have accustomed myself to consider it as beneficial to the cause of truth. Had more ample materials been handed down of the age next to the apostolical, future times might have acquiesced too much in the practice and opinions of those early christians, and have studied with less attention the true records of

* Acts x. xi. 1 to 19. 19. xiii. 46. xv. 1 to 33. xv. 39. xvi. 3. xxi. 20 to 27. Rom. 11 first chapters. 1 Cor. i. 11. xi. 17. Gal. i. 6. ii. 3 to 21. v. to 12. vi. 12. 2 Thess. iii. 2. 2 Tim. i. 15. The whole epistle to the Hebrews. James ii. 1 to 11. Rev. letters to the churches of the early christians, ii. iii. to 22.

their faith in the new testament. But providence now seems to speak in the strongest and clearest manner to christian societies. Study the scriptures alone; make them the rule of your faith and practice. An apostle was suffered to err after divine inspiration, that you might learn to form your practice not by the practice of others but by the inspired word of god. The early christians run into errours, that you might not make them the guide of your conduct; you have the revealed will of god in the scriptures, and the interpretation of it will not be difficult, if you interpret scripture by scripture, not by the uncertain traditions and opinions of fallible men. The practice then of every christian age is of no other weight in this question, than to incline us to examine with greater attention the grounds of that practice; and, if it is not clearly founded in scripture, we are at liberty in any age to reject it.

I might observe here also, that the grounds for baptism seem to cease naturally with the apostolical age. During the mosaical dispensation the notion of purity and impurity from birth was very strong in the teachers of christianity, and without baptism it would have been difficult to overcome their prejudices, and to unite the jewish and heathen converts in reli-

gious worship. On the overthrow of the temple and the jewish polity the christians and jews seem to have been completely separated: few jews came over to the christians, and the great body of christians was no longer liable to injury from jewish prejudices. Hence the retaining of the rite of baptism was probably owing to a misconception of some passages in scripture and to the not attending particularly to these circumstances; namely, that the precept for baptising was given to the apostles without any charge for the perpetual observance of the rite—that it does not speak of the baptising of each individual, but of nations in general—and that the peculiar favour of Christ in this commission was limited to a period of about forty years.

But, though it appears to me, my lord, that baptism is no longer necessary in christian countries, I cannot look upon the advocates for this rite with either scorn or derision. I highly respect those, who, in imitating the practice of our saviour and his apostles, act on the idea of obedience to his command, and by him, who is fully convinced in his own mind that our saviour's command reaches to the present times, it ought to be observed in its fullest extent. You and I, my lord, on the other hand, who seem to

agree in opinion, that this rite is no longer necessary, will endeavour to impresss it on our minds, that not in the outward washing of the body but in the inward purity of heart consist the essentials of christianity.

I remain, with great respect, &c.

LETTER IV.

Mischiefs derived from it—sentiments of the church of England on this subject right—derivation and meaning of the term—right to excommunicate—who ought either to be excommunicated or to excommunicate themselves.

MY LORD,

FOR a long period in the history of our country excommunication occasioned great evils both to individuals and to the community at large. Our ancesters, in our saviour's time, among the most superstitious of the human race, were accustomed to pay such deference to their druids, a species of men like the present jugglers in America, that they hunted out of society the stricken deer, whom the druids had excluded from the consecrated groves. To the druids succeeded the priests of the romish church, to whom the veneration for the druid was transferred; and the priest, by excluding from the altar an unfortunate individual, held him out to society as unworthy of the comforts and even necessaries of life. The people, who could tear their neighbour to pieces in complaisance to a priest, were easily degraded into tools for

greater frauds, and the pope made use of them in his disputes with the highest temporal authority. If the king offended the pope, the whole nation was put under an interdict; and weak minds, wavering, as may easily be imagined, between their allegiance to the king and their duty to the church, sided not unfrequently with the priest against their sovereign.

The accumulated crimes on all sides, to which the misunderstood notion of excommunication had given rise, might have induced our reformers to guard the term from abuse; but certain reasons, not necessary to be unfolded to your lordship, rendered them on this point as on many others far from explicit, and there is in the thirty-third article of the church sufficient room for the infliction of pains and penalties, which neither reason nor religion can justify. On the other hand this article rightly explained contains nothing censurable; and it will appear, from an inquiry into the real nature of excommunication, that a society cannot subsist without the allowance of the power given in this article to the church.

Excommunication is derived from a latin word, which signifies the exclusion of an individual from certain rights enjoyed in common with the other members of a society. This exclusion

may be for a time limited or unlimited; may be an act of the individual or of the society. Among the quakers, whose discipline is in this respect worthy of notice, if not imitation, limited excommunication is not unfrequent. Excommunication is the act of an individual, when he quits of his own accord the society of which he was a member, and it is the act of the society, when the society expels or removes a member from its connection. This is a well-known thing in societies of which you and I, my lord, are members. In colleges at the universities, the names of the members are written on boards, and the name of the member is cut off sometimes by the college, but in general by himself or by his order: that is, in the former case the society declares the individual, in the latter he declares himself to be no longer a member of the college. In the same manner the church of England sometimes, but very rarely, excludes a member from its community; the common or rather a very general case it is for individuals to excommunicate themselves; as the churches in London will testify every sunday to any one, who is at the trouble of visiting those meetings, and comparing the number in them with that of the body of inhabitants in the metropolis.

That a society has the right upon certain oc-

casions to excommunicate a member has never been doubted; but the other side of the question, namely, that a member of a society may excommunicate himself, has not been so generally allowed, and it is supposed that there are certain rights in certain societies over their members, which cannot be dissolved but by the death of the individual. I allude to the connexion between the subject and the sovereign of any country, on which though I find no difficulty myself, it may in the present times and in the present state of the liberty of the press be dangerous to enter into a discussion. Be this extreme case as it may, it is certain, that in general an individual may remove from the society, with which he from either choice or chance has been connected; and in fact he may often continue apparently a member, when in reality he ought to have seceded. Thus, if a person denies the propriety of offering up prayers to Christ as an object of equal adoration with god; or, if a clergyman should institute societies for religious worship contrary to the discipline of the church of England, both persons are certainly liable to excommunication by the church, till they act with greater consistency by excommunicating themselves.

The latter case brings to my mind a singular instance, which probably has fallen within the

notice of your lordship, of the inadvertence of persons to their own conduct. Not long ago a clergyman of the university of Cambridge, remarkably tenacious of what he supposed to be the doctrines of the church of England, joined in an attack on a gentleman, who with equal tenacity declared his disbelief of some of those doctrines: at the very time the clergyman was in the habit of offending against the discipline of the church, and from the slumbering of her censures, he probably persuades himself at this very moment, that notwithstanding his repeated delinquencies he is still one of her truest sons. It is not for me to judge the schismatick, nor would it become me to express much concern at the art, with which his brethren the evangelical clergy, as they presume to style themselves, are in a similar manner undermining the establishment*: yet open warfare is honourable, treachery is by all parties esteemed disgraceful.

I remain,

With great respect, &c.

* See Daubeney's letters to Sir Richard Hill, Bart.

LETTER V.

How to treat an excommunicated person—heathens and publicans—dangerous opinion of the bishop—consequence of the civil power interfering with excommunication—christian excommunication—the writer's and bishop's mode of excommunicating each other.

MY LORD,

THE church of England has a right in common with other societies to cut off a member from its communion: and it now becomes of some importance to learn in what estimation the discarded member is to be held by his former brethren. Here I firmly agree with the church, and wish, that its members may understand, and as firmly act up to its precepts. "That "person, which by open denunciation of the "church is rightly cut off from the unity of the "church, and excommunicated, ought to be "taken of the whole multitude of the faithful "as an heathen and publican." What sort of treatment this is must be learned from scripture and from the conduct of our saviour and his apostles towards heathen men and publicans.

In our saviour's time the world was divided into two great classes, jews and heathens: the jews boasting of their high privileges as the favoured people of god, the heathen given up to the wildest extravagances of superstition and credulity. The jews could not in religious though they might in temporal concerns associate with the heathen; and a jew would therefore have understood by the expression of the church, that a discarded person was entitled to every office of friendship and humanity not incompatible with the duties of the jewish religion. But a christian must go still farther: for the heathen were considered by Christ in a still higher point of view, as persons capable of becoming members of his community, and to convert them was the principle object of apostolical missions. Hence the discarded person is entitled not only to every office of friendship and humanity compatible with the duties of religion, but he is to be looked upon as one, who may hereafter become a brother, and no effort consistent with christian love and kindness is to be lost, which may be the means of inducing him to give the church the right hand of fellowship.

The publicans were an order of men in the roman empire of considerable rank, but from farming the taxes, the payment of which was

peculiarly irksome to a jew, they were held in great abhorrence in Judea. Hence the church of England seems to hold out some encouragement to ill-treat and despise a discarded person, but she will not permit such a mode of estimating her expressions; she forbids us to look at the jewish, when we have before our eyes our saviour's conduct towards this order of men. It is an accusation upon record against him, that he used to eat and drink, that is, he lived and conversed freely with publicans, and from this order of men he selected one of his constant companions. Hence to treat the discarded person as a publican does not imply, that he is to be excluded from all social, but merely as before, from all religious intercourse, till he has acceded to the terms of the community.

I have been thus particular in explaining the former part of the article, because your lordship after many excellent proofs of the right of the church to excommunicate has forgotten to consider, what perhaps is the most important part, how the excommunicated person, according to the title of the article, is to be avoided. On the reconciliation of the discarded person to the church I am rather puzzled than enlightened, I must confess, by your lordship's account of the process: for you refer me to Blackstone and Burn, two writers, who are not likely to be well

informed on such a subject, and talk of a lawful magistrate interfering to pronounce the sentence of excommunication. Now, if this is the real doctrine of the church of England, in the article under discussion, I must withdraw my assent to it: for, though I am convinced, that the reformers did not mean to give up the old mode of working with people of a different persuasion, I cannot persuade myself, that this article was intended to develope their future conduct. The discarded person is to remain, they say, separated from the church, "until he be openly reconciled "by penance, and received into the church by "a judge, that hath authority thereunto." Pennance is an old word derived from the French *penitence*, as that is from the latin *penitentia*, and expresses merely the sorrow of mind for an offence given. Now, if offence has been given, the offender cannot well be reconciled to his former society without some token of sorrow, nor received into the society but by some form, and this form may be read by the person appointed to judge of his repentance, and in the easiest manner to restore him again to the bosom of his friends. This, my lord, is my explanation of the article; and I differ from your lordship on the following words of your explanation. "As excommunication is a publick sentence "pronounced by a lawful magistrate, the restor-"ation of an excommunicated person to com-

" munion with the church ought to be a publick " act, executed by a judge, who hath authority " thereunto, and with such forms and after such " acts of publick pennance as the church has " thought proper to prescribe*." Here I am fearful, that your lordship means by " publick " sentence, lawful magistrate, publick act exe- " cuted by a judge, and act of public pennance," certain persons and things extraneous to the society called the church, and belonging to the civil not the spiritual power: in which case, my lord, you appear to me to have given a sense to the article which it does not admit, and to confound together ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction, the power of the state and the rights of a private society. But we do not perhaps differ so much as your words seem to imply, for in the next page you rightly observe, that, " among the early " christians excommunication did not deprive a " person of his natural or civil rights," and that the popes abused their power in this instance in the most atrocious manner. It is true, my lord, that, with the early christians excommunication was not attended with any other loss than that of religious communion; for these christians deriving happily no assistance whatever from the civil power, and, being under the lash of oppression themselves, were unable and, I wish I could say, unwilling to oppress their brethren. The

* Vol. II. 521.

civil power came in afterwards to their aid, and the necessary consequences followed. Excommunication led the way to the plunder of a person's property, the burning down of his house, imprisonment, fines, banishment, death. Such a violation of the precepts of the gospel produced in its turn the natural fruits; and the civil power, which had abused its trust, was by degrees brought under the most abject submission to the vilest and most despicable form of government. An old man elected by artful, intriguing, ambitious, old men, gave laws to the greater part of Europe. Unused to the tender charities of life he was swayed only by two passions, avarice and ambition: implicit obedience was exacted from his subjects, and the blood of the heretick was the only expiation for the presumption to question his decrees. Such a domination rendered men brutish, and it has been our lot, my lord, to witness its overthrow by that nation, which had been its most zealous supporter; to see wickedness on one side give way to wickedness on the opposite extreme; to adore and glorify that providence, whose ways are thus justified to man, teaching us, that tyranny spiritual as well as civil inevitably produces in due time the engines of its own destruction.

In a christian point of view excommunication will from the natural infirmity of man sometimes

follow christian communication, and the nature of the one depends on the nature of the other. Christian communion is the union of persons acknowledging no authority in their society but that of Christ; and his precepts with those of the apostles in the new testament form the whole code of their laws *. This union is designed for spiritual purposes, and it is abused by every one, who has in view a mere temporal advantage by connecting himself with the society. The denial of Christ's authority, or the setting up of any authority in competition with his, is a violation of the principles of union, and sufficient ground for the excommunication of a member: but excommunication is not to be lightly entered upon, nor put in force for every deviation from the strictest purity of the gospel. In this case, as in all others, our saviour's rules and conduct are a sufficient guide to the society. How often shall my brother offend me, and I pardon him? unto seven times! Nay, unto seventy times seven. Peter also was not driven away from christian communion, though he had thrice denied his master. Excommunication is

* See A narrative of the proceedings of the society of baptists in York, in relinquishing the popular systems of religion from the study of the scriptures by D. Eaton. 1800. London. Johnson and Marsom.

abused, by a christian society, when it involves an individual in any temporal calamity, if he is injured in his trade, profession or calling, by being separated from his society. The individual is to be treated by his former associates with the utmost courtesy and christian kindness, and by the act of excommunication he is separated only from the religious worship and society of his brethren. Where excommunication is very frequent, the society is probably in fault by a too minute and pharisaical attention to the conduct of its members: where it is very rare the society is either very excellent or very negligent, and bordering upon the dissolute life of the sadducees. In two of these cases the society is approaching to decay, and it would not be difficult to point out two societies now on the verge of dissolution, the one by the excess, the other by the total absence of discipline.

But, my lord, it is time that I should finish this long letter, and I will not permit myself to suspect, that, if our separate opinions should lead us to consider each other as excommunicated persons, we shall ever fail in obedience to the evangelical precepts: and, if we cannot join together in religious communion, we will not abjure the urbanities of life, we will behave to each other as heathens and publicans, that is,

in the language of modern times as men and gentlemen. At present I beg leave to subscribe myself under a better title,

My lord,

Your lordship's

affectionate brother in Christ,

WILLIAM FREND.

LETTER VI.

Difficulties of the early protestants—the bishop and the writer hereticks—the church of England's decision right—abuse of authority—a curious instance—question to the bishop.

MY LORD,

THE protestants were, at the beginning of their innovations, entangled in sad difficulties. They had been accustomed to look with reverence on the opinions of the fathers, to study the decrees of councils, and to bend to the authority of past ages. Such a habit is not overcome in a moment. The fathers and councils were pressed into their service, but frequently gave evident marks of disapprobation. The romanist saw the confusion of his adversary, overwhelmed him with quotation on quotation, till the poor protestant driven to despair, with a powerful effort cut the knot, which he could not unloose. In a moment the spell was dissolved: fathers and councils were declared liable to errour; and the romanist, now foiled in his turn,

had no other resource left, but to deliver up to Satan the incorrigible heretick.

In this situation, you and I, my lord, still remain in the eyes of a majority of christians: we are incorrigible hereticks; and, to say the truth, my lord, whatever may be the presumption of the great body of christians in calling your lordship a heretick, I am not in the least uneasy under this terrible imputation. For what is the distinction between orthodox and heretick? Is it not, my lord, the same as that of majority and minority, fashionable and unfashionable, a distinction, which excites caution in the wise, but exacts implicit obedience from the fool? The orthodox prides himself on the splendour of an establishment, on the antiquity of his church, on the numbers and talents and rank in his party: the heretick, however great his errours may be, has this to say in his defence, that they were not embraced without much thought and deliberation, and that they arose from his head not his heart.

The decision of the church of England is in this respect admirable and praise-worthy. In her constitutional code she declares, that nothing is to be believed, which cannot be warranted by scripture; and that individuals,

churches, and councils may err and have erred. After so positive a declaration, one would imagine, that there could be no good grounds for the opinion, that the chief difference between the churches of England and Rome is very trifling: the one declaring herself to be infallible, the other allowing herself to be fallible but never in the wrong. I agree however with the church of England, that individuals and churches may err and have erred: to this rule I know of but one exception; and it seems extraordinary, that of the numbers, who believe in the same infallible guide, so many should prefer the opinions of fallible men to the words of their saviour.

What then is the use of authority? In the course of your work, my lord, you refer me continually to Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, three swarthy africans, and make copious extracts from the writings of one Mr. Veneer. Without compliment, I would as soon take the opinion of your lordship on any passage in scripture, as the concurrent explanation of these worthy divines. It would astonish any one, who has not reflected upon this point, to observe the credulity of most writers and readers on religious subjects. Let it be said, that such a point is to be believed; and, when the names of Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Ambrose, and Mr. Veneer

are quoted, who can have the presumption to hesitate a moment? Yet a short pause may be useful; and, if the question is on a matter of fact, ought we not to enquire into the circumstances, which either insure or affect the credibility of these gentlemen? As for example, did they live at or near the place and time, when the fact was supposed to have happened? If the question is on a passage of scripture, what proofs have these gentlemen given of their acquaintance with the language in which it was originally written? Were they never warped by prejudices, which rendered them incapable of seeing it in its true light? You cannot conceive, my lord, without having tried the experiment, what an effect such questions have upon the judgement, and both for the pleasure attending and instruction to be derived from such an exercise, I must take the liberty of recommending to your lordship to re-peruse your work, and on citing your authorities just to sketch in the margin the degree of credit which attaches to their names. For example, St. —— lived 250 years after the fact, and 1500 miles from the place. St. —— wrote indifferent latin in an indifferent style, knew very little greek, and believed a great number of silly tales. By such a proceeding the solidity of your text will be much improved, the weak parts will be

thrown away, and nothing will be retained which you cannot support upon real evidence.

An instance will perhaps better explain my meaning; and, not to dive into antiquity, I will take mine from the comments of your lordship on a fact, which happened between two and and three hundred years ago. In the twentieth article of the church of England are these words: "The church hath power to decree rites "or ceremonies, and authority in controversies "of faith." These words stand in all the copies of the articles now printed by authority, and yet it is supposed, that they are a forgery: for, the original writing is still extant in Benet college library; and there are several printed copies of the articles about the same date, in which, as well as in the original, these words are not to be found. The controversy may be seen at full length in a book entitled, "Priest-craft in perfection" to which I beg leave to refer your lordship; and there is a gentleman now alive, who, if not engaged in more important pursuits, could throw additional light upon this extraordinary transaction.

Your lordship accounts for the omission in the following manner. "This first clause is not "in the MS. copy of the articles in the library

" of Benet college Cambridge, which s thus " accounted for: that copy was left to the col- " lege by archbishop Parker, and was the one " signed by the bishops, &c. when they first " met: they afterwards agreed to add this " clause, and another copy including it was " signed. The former copy remained in the " hands of the archbishop, and was left by him " to the college; the second copy was depo- " sited in the register-court of the province " of Canterbury, and was burnt in the fire of " London *." Here are some point-blank assertions, in which it is possible, that your lordship may be mistaken. The bishops may not have met as you assert; may not have made a second copy; may not have signed it, &c. &c. &c. Without any imputation on your lordship's veracity I have my doubts on your statement: for your lordship lives between two and three hundred years, since the transaction is supposed to have happened, and you have not referred your readers to a single authority in support of this very extraordinary history. What then am I to write in the margin of your work? A simple query. How came the bishop of Lincoln to be so exact in his account of a transaction, which happened between two and three centuries ago? Was it by inspiration, by tradition, or by

* Vol. II. p. 332.

historical evidence? In the next edition of your work I shall hope to be satisfied on these points, and in the mean time recommend most strenuously to your lordship to weigh in as equal a balance the authority of the early fathers, several of whom were addicted to the use of a figure in speech, which, however current in the days of credulity, is now reprobated in all good company.

I remain, &c.

LETTER VII.

The famous fires in Alexandria and London—the writer takes a journey—is much abused on the road—finds the early fathers—different ways of travelling—some very strange strange parties galloped over a great number of people.

MX LORD,

YOU remember the celebrated answer of the caliph to his general on the taking of Alexandria, which so easily accounts for the disappearance of the famous library in that city. If the books contain only what is in the koran they are useless, if any thing against the koran they are mischievous: let them therefore at all events be burnt. In consequence of this sagacious decree, the baths of Alexandria were heated for six months with parchment and papyrus. The story is a very good one; *si non é vero é ben trovato*; and the fire at Alexandria serves just as good a purpose as the famous fire of London mentioned in my last letter: for both stories accord with the horatian precept, and the god does not make his appearance till he is wanted. Shall it be inferred then, that I wish to make a similar blaze of fathers and councils?

by no means—far be from me such an imputation! I hold both in great esteem, and, when I had access to them, I did what very few do, I was in the habit of consulting them.

What is the use then of the fathers? the old allegory may amuse your lordship. The searchers after religious truths are like travellers on a journey: their road is as straight as can possibly be conceived, but, from not having been well trodden down and from the nature of the country through which it passes, the traveller without great attention is liable to miss his way. To prevent this a book of directions is prepared for him, but many will not purchase, and others do not often give themselves the trouble of consulting it. In every part of the road are guides, who profess to be well acquainted with the country, and such multitudes go merrily under their direction, that, instead of there being only one road to the journey's end, there seem to be ten thousand meandring paths, on which it is much more agreeable to divert oneself, than to pursue the dull uniformity of a straight line. I found myself once in one of these parties, and very merrily we jogged on together, some not knowing, others not caring, whether they were in the right road or not; and at times our guides would point out to us some remarkable place, which they affirmed was a spot marked down in the

book of directions. One day by some accident or another I had the curiosity to look more attentively than usual at one of these spots; and, on comparing it with the place described in the book of directions, there did not seem to be the least resemblance between them. I rubbed my eyes, looked again, but all to no purpose; the more I examined the greater did the difference appear to be. This accident puzzled me extremely, but from a kind of habit and prejudice in favour of my guides I went on a little farther, not without some suspicions in my mind, which grew stronger and stronger the more I looked at my book of directions. At last I determined to go no farther, till I had taken another view of the spot, which had been the first cause of my uneasiness. I went back, examined it with the utmost attention, was convinced that I was in the wrong and I determined to get back if possible into the right road.

From that moment to this I have never ceased to rejoice at my resolution: but it is impossible for your lordship to figure to yourself the pain, the uneasiness, the disquiet of mind between the first suspicion of errour and its growth into full conviction, between the conviction and the resolution to quit it, from the time of exerting the resolution till all the struggles between hope and fear, preferment and poverty, honour and

disgrace are completely subdued. The ties of friendship and relationship may be broken, the fairest prospects must vanish, assured comforts must be resigned, dangers and difficulties must be encountered. Deceived once by your guides you view all others with the eye of suspicion, and they, who are best able to conduct you, have been represented under such colours, that you rather avoid than court their assistance. Such was my situation on leaving the critical spot, when the usual exclamations saluted my ear. You fool! said one, don't you see how well we are going on, and what excellent guides we have: would they, do you think, go before us, if they did not know the way: and, how should you understand the book of directions better than we do? What a pity, said another, that you of all men should take such a silly freak into your head! If you go on but a little longer, you may become a great guide yourself; and, as for the fellows, who have turned back at this spot, they are such a set of miserable half-starved wretches, that I should be ashamed to be seen in their company. Words alone did not satisfy the indignation of others, some laughed at me, some pelted me with mud and stones, some tore off my coat and waistcoat, and others picked my pockets. I should tire your lordship with the detail of my adventures through the wide-wasting wilderness, which I now had

to explore, and I can scarcely recollect the curious forms, which at every step struck my attention.

——————variarum monstra ferarum,
Centauri in foribus stabulant, Scyllæque biformes,
Et centum-geminus Briareus, ac bellua Lernæ
Horrendùm stridens, flammisque armata Chimæra,
Gorgones, Harpyiæque, et forma tricorporis umbræ.

At the drawing of a two-edged sword more powerful than that of Æneas these idle figures vanish into thin air: with joy inexpressible I recognise the clear streams of Siloam *.

Securos latices, et longa oblivia poto.
The living waters wash away my cares.

Upon or near the true road I frequently found some of the early fathers, who are posted there as guides, and for a few miles are very pleasant companions; but it is dangerous to rely on any of them with implicit confidence, and their conversation must be hourly compared with the notes in the book of directions. Indeed they are continually leading multitudes into erreur, and are useful rather in describing the by-paths in which they once bewildered themselves, than the beauties of the country through which the straight road passes. If any one, who has travelled on the straight road, wishes to become a guide to others, he cannot do better than to

* Psalm xlvi. 4. This was a favourite psalm with Luther.

spend a little time with these early fathers, trace out the country with them on each side of the road, and mark particularly the deviations into which the old gentlemen feel a constant inclination to conduct him. Thus he will be enabled to give constant information to the wandering multitude. That road, he will cry out, will lead you into a bog or a quagmire. You may easily perceive your errour, if you attend to the change in the country, you will see gold and silver ornaments every where, lighted lamps before well-dressed images, splendid processions accompanied with triumphant songs, but if you listen attentively, the rattling of chains and the groans of the tortured cannot be drowned in the orgies of the priests and the acclamations of the multitude. Take care of that road on the left: the vines and fruits in the fine valley before you will excite for the moment extasies of delight, but behind is the cave of despair: do you not see that your guides are affected, and that frequently they appear to be either drunk or mad. In short there is a common character in all the by-paths: at a certain distance the guides begin to give themselves great airs—they cannot bear to be questioned—they either knock you down themselves or excite the mob to plunder you, if you presume to say a word about their proceedings.

It is not so in the straight road, where every traveller is happy in his companions, and their whole pleasure is to compare the country with the book of directions. If one happens to stumble, the others run to his help: if he goes astray, two or three will as if by accident meet him in his wanderings, and gradually bring him back to the right path, when there is joy in every countenance on the recovery of their friend. In short among the straight-forward travellers there is nothing but joy, and peace, and sound mirth, and love, and temperance, and friendship, and harmony: in the by-roads there are stately processions, fine robes, grand titles, obstreperous mirth, great noise, with envyings, hatred, malice, murders, drunkenness, enmities, avarice, pride, and ambition. Another curious circumstance is that, as the meandering paths frequently cross the straight road, the crossings are continually crowded with vast multitudes, who are sure to fall upon the straight-forward travellers in their way, and to abuse them with hard names and hard blows, and hence by the way side are to be seen on the distant hills heaps of bones piled up by the multitude as trophies of their victories over the straight-forward traveller: for this is the characteristick difference between the two sorts of travellers, he who goes along the straight road

will never injure a person for choosing a different path; they, who wander in the crooked paths, will assuredly, when they see a straightforward traveller, set upon him, hang him, burn him, stone him, or at the least pick his pockets.

Your lordship's book recalls to my memory a number of circumstances, that occurred to me on this road, among which I cannot forget some strange fellows dressed like merry-andrews, and scampering away, as hard as they could drive over hill and dale in a thousand directions. One party was going, I was told, to Nice, another to Constantinople, a third to Ephesus, and a fourth to Chalcedon; at which places they played a variety of mad tricks, chopping a sort of barbarous logick, and making nonsense verses. It would be endless to relate all the anecdotes I heard of these gentry: but as usual their diversions ended in knocking a few of the straightforward travellers on the head, who, it was pretended, had crossed and jostled with them on their journey. Their pranks are now almost forgotten: but it is the general opinion of the well-informed, that there was more knavery than folly in this bustle, and that under the colour of playing the buffoon and amusing the people, some notable schemes were contrived

for a very different purpose. However that may be, may you and I, my lord, steer clear of such madcaps as long as we live; for, be assured, that if once we get into their clutches, we shall never escape in a whole skin.

I remain, &c.

LETTER VIII.

Derivation and meaning of the words church, bishop, presbyter —a long ladder—uninterrupted succession of bishop's where— alliance of church and state—alliance of kirk and state—all christians equally priests—but a public teacher or reader may be useful.

MY LORD,

THERE are two societies in this island established by law, called churches, the one in England, the other in Scotland, both laying claim to a form of government appointed by the apostles. The church of England is governed under the king by bishops, that of Scotland professedly under Christ by presbyters: and we must have recourse to the greek language for the understanding of the words church, bishop, presbyter, sounds, which have excited much animosity and even bloodshed among men pretending to be christians. The word church derives its origin in this manner. By the greeks an assembly or meeting was called *ecclesia*, and the christian assembly, was called *kyriake ecclesia* or the lord's assembly. The french have adopted one

part of the greek expression, the english and scotch the other. From *ecclesia* the french made *église* their term for a christian meeting: the english softened *kyriake* into church, but the scotch retaining more of the original sound made it into kirk. The kirk has its presbyters, the church its bishops.

Presbyter is derived from a word frequent in the greek testament, *presbyteros*, which means an elder: and the early christians imitating the practice of the synagogue regulated the concerns of their societies by committees elected from the body of christians in each place, and the members of this committee being in general the elder part of the assembly were called presbyteroi or elders. This term is retained by the scotch very nearly in its original sound: the french transformed it into *prestre* then *prêtre*, the english into priest, and the latter nations in departing from the sound of the original word have swerved also very far from its original meaning. Bishop comes also from a word in the new testament, whose changes are amusing to the etymologist. The english cast off the first letter and the final termination, and from *episcopus* is made piscop, then bishop. The french strike out more, and from the same word passing through an italian strainer they made *évesque* then *évêque*. The word *episcopus* means

an overseer, for the officer bearing this name was the overseer of the society and answered to our term president or the head of the synagogue. Hence the bishop or overseer was always a presbyter or elder, but every elder was not a bishop. To arrive at this office in the apostolical times certain qualifications were thought requisite, which are described in Paul's letters to Timothy, and no intrigue was used, because it was a post of more danger than profit: as christianity became in fashion, the office of bishop was more coveted, it was attended with honour, emolument, little labour, and no danger; by degrees bishops and presbyters assumed to themselves a greater port, claimed certain rights and privileges as if they were a peculiar cast, distinguished by peculiar holiness from the rest of the society, who were now called laity, from the greek word *laos* meaning the people or the vulgar.

At the reformation, when England and Scotland separated themselves, or made the great schism from the romish church, disputes ran high on the mode of governing the new societies, whether by presbyters without bishops, or by bishops with presbyters. The church of England contended, that the parent church retained the antient mode of government from the time of the apostles, and bishops were consequently

a *sine qua non* in the new church. They were also indispensably necessary because the priests and deacons could be invested with certain powers only by bishops, and these bishops could not confer that power, unless they had received the power of conferring the power from mouth to mouth in regular succession down from one of the apostles. Unfortunately for the church of England the only ladder, by which she could climb to the throne of an apostle was in the possession of the church of Rome, who in very civil language told her, that the ladder was indeed at Rome situated on a rock, but in somewhat rude terms assured her that she should never set her foot on the lowest step of it, unless she previously kissed the toe of his holiness. On the other hand the kirk under no concern about this ladder endeavours to soothe her sister: my dear lady, says she, why do you so distress yourself about a trifle. Don't you remember, when we were girls, and lived at home with this strange mother of ours, we used to play about this said ladder, but it was fit for nothing but child's play. You climbed higher than I did, and one day got two-thirds of the way up to the top. I shall never forget it, as long as I live, for I strained my neck in looking after you, and never expected to see you alive upon the ground again. On coming down what an account you gave me! At one place several steps

were missing, at another there were only knobs on the side on which you could scarcely lay hold or set your foot, and at last you were so giddy, that you could not see whether the ladder reached to the top of the tower or not. The people too, who showed this ladder as a curiosity, used to laugh in their sleeves and to tell me privately, that they never knew any body get into the castle that way; and it had been handed down to them, that the highest step in the ladder was not within half a dozen yards of the top of the wall. Besides though climbing ladders might do very well for a girl, only consider, if you could now even get to the foot of the ladder, which is clearly impossible, what a figure you would make half way up in the air with your petticoats flying about you? really, my dear sister, you would be the laugh of the whole neighbourhood.

But let us come to the more serious arguments of your lordship on this ludicrous subject. "In ecclesiastical writers we shall find," you say, "the clearest proof that bishops were "instituted by the apostles, and continued aft "erwards as a distinct order from that of priests*," and you tell me on the authority of Tertullian, that Peter ordained Clement to be

* Vol. II. p. 377.

bishop of Rome. I should be much obliged to your lordship to point out the "ecclesiastical "writers" who have afforded your lordship this "clearest proof," for the introduction of poor Tertullian to prove Clement's bishoprick in Rome, when there is some reason to doubt, that Peter was ever in that metropolis makes me rather incredulous on the respectability of your other ecclesiastical writers. There were then in the primitive church according to your lordship's account three distinct orders of ministers, bishops, presbyters, deacons. I allow that the apostolical churches were under the directions of presbyters or committee of elders, under whom the deacons ministered for certain purposes, and over whom one of the body was the president, bishop, or overseer. But your lordship continues and asserts; "that there has "been a regular succession of bishops from the "apostolical age to the present time:" I have your word for it, but where is the proof? where is the church, in which this succession is to be found? I must take the liberty of asserting with equal confidence and perhaps on much greater application to this point than the numerous avocations of your lordship would permit you to bestow upon it, that, there is no one church now in existence, which can trace up to the apostolical age the succession of its bishops:

or to make it clearer, there is no one bishop now in existence, who has derived his power from an apostle communicated to him in a right line by bishop to bishop. If there is such a bishop, I beg your lordship to name him, and to favour me with a copy of the names of his predecessers to the time of the apostles: and, if there is no flaw in the table, I pledge myself to retract my assertion, and to come over with pleasure to your lordship's opinion.

The question I propose to you, my lord, does not injure the present claims of bishops, since you do "not contend that the bishops, priests "and deacons of England are precisely the "same that bishops, presbyters and deacons "were in Asia-minor seventeen hundred years "ago *." The nearest likeness I can find between them is in their names, and this is not very apparent to an english reader. Your lordship however decides well the question on government and readily acknowledges, "that there is "no precept in the new testament, which com-"mands, that every church should be governed "by bishops †." This is a great concession; and, if England should again choose to new-model its ecclesiastical polity, it has one great

* Vol. II. p. 395. † Ib. p. 396.

authority on the bench to defend it from the censures of the church. But alas! you could not become the advocate for your country: unless, as you have in the next page combined temporal and eternal happiness in the oddest manner conceivable, you should on reperusing smile as much as I did, on copying your own words. "We who live in this country," says your lordship, "have the satisfaction of know-"ing, that we live under a form of ecclesiastical "polity founded in apostolical authority and "under a form of government of unparalleled "excellence: and these constitutions in church "and state are admirably suited by their con-"genial nature and intimate alliance to afford "mutual assistance and support to each other. "They are so blended and interwoven, that "they must stand or fall together: and the "friends of the temporal and of the eternal in-"terests of their fellow creatures are equally "called upon to stand forward in the mainte-"nance and defence of both *." The state is not much obliged to you, my lord, for this compliment: as well might the misletoe exclaim, that on its excision the towering oak would be levelled with the ground. The parliament of England made, and can unmake the church of

* Vol. II. p. 397.

England: the constitution of England existed before this modern church was known or even thought of, and it may exist, when even the remembrance of the church shall have vanished away. What is this support too lent by the church to the state? in what does it consist? from property or from the supposed influence of its religious character on the manners of the people? The number of meetings erected within the last twenty years will give your lordship a better idea of this influence than any thing, which I can suggest: and the evangelical clergy will inform you with what prospects they are laying the seeds for future secessions. The real weakness of a society is seldom known, till the enemy himself is astonished at the ease of its overthrow.

Since the church of England is so good an ally of the state, the church of Scotland cannot be so "blended and interwoven" with it: yet a presbyter in the high kirk of Edinburgh will with equal zeal and sincerity adopt your lordship's sentiments. For "we who live in Scot-"land," says the presbyter, "have the satisfac-"tion of knowing that we live under a form of "ecclesiastical polity founded in apostolical "authority, and under a form of civil govern-"ment of unparalleled excellence: and these

" constitutions in kirk and state are admirably " suited by their congenial nature and intimate " alliance to afford mutual assistance and sup- " port to each other. They are so blended " and interwoven, that they must stand or fall " together: and the friends of the temporal " and of the eternal interests of their fellow " creatures are equally called upon to stand " forward in the maintenance and defence of " both *." Thus, my lord, is the constitution of Britain made to depend upon so trifling a circumstance as the existence of a bishop on the one and of a presbyter on the other side of a brook. But, my lord, you are not aware of the disparagement you are casting on the church. A true christian church may exist under any form of government whatever, and, wherever it is, it will meliorate if not the constitution at least the manners of the subjects. The church of Rome with all its real or supposed faults never fell into so gross an errour. Her banners were equally erected in the democracies of Gerisau and Appenzel, in the aristocracies of Poland, Venice, Lucerne and Genoa, in the monarchies of Spain, Portugal and France. I will not do the church of England this injustice: its existence in the united states of Ame-

* See on this subject an excellent work entitled Church and State by F. Plowden.

rica justifies it entirely from your lordship's insinuations.

From disputes on church and kirk, bishop and presbyter, let us revert to the instructions of our saviour on these subjects. Where two or three are together in my name, says our lord, I am in the midst of you. These two or three were at liberty to regulate their concerns in consistence with decency and order, as they pleased. A mistake seems to have arisen in comparing an institution for the sake merely of order, with a divine institution for a peculiar purpose: and hence the presbyter or elder of the new has been confounded with the priest of the old testament. It is difficult to find any resemblance between them. The christian religion rent the veil of the temple, and threw down the distinction between priest and people. Every christian is a priest, all equally capable of offering up the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the god of their lord Jesus Christ. The presbyter of the new testament was not a person appointed to preach and pray; he might do both, or he might not do either; he was merely one of a committee to regulate the concerns of the society. He was not by this office taken from his own business or calling: but he might like any other individual in those or in these days dedicate himself entirely with the consent

of the society to religious meditation, the reading of the scriptures, and the instruction of others. The constitutions of churches will grow old and decay: the church of Christ or the society of real christians dispersed over the whole world is founded upon a rock and can never be overthrown *.

I remain, &c.

* The idle prejudice on the connection between the constitution and the churches by law established in England and Scotland is daily wearing out; and a fact, which took place within these few months in my native city, is a striking proof, that mankind begin to see the folly of tearing each other to pieces for their religious opinions.

In the Guildhall of the city of Canterbury at the first burghmote held by the present mayor he moved the court—

That, the mayor's tenets of religion preventing his attending divine service agreeably to the forms established by the church of England, the senior alderman be requested to attend as his *locum tenens*.

The motion was carried unanimously, and the senior alderman has in consequence attended at the cathedral.

The chief magistrate of that city, within whose walls is the highest throne of ecclesiastical domination, distinguishes justly between the rights of the citizen and the duty of the churchman. The citizens under him may frequent the jewish synagogue, the catholick chapel, the english church, the presbyterian, the independant, the baptist, the methodist meetings. He will not attempt to controul their choice, nor permit them to dictate to him, in what manner he is to spend his sundays. England will follow the example set by the men of Kent, and religious toleration will be established.

LETTER IX.

Fables according to the bishop dangerous, deceitful and blasphemous—the lord's supper in its origin—how changed—not a supper but a feast upon a sacrifice.

MY LORD,

TO trace the progress of popular customs is curious and instructing. In the christmas holidays the misletoe in our churches and the choosing of king and queen remind us of the solemn festivals of the druids, and the licentiousness of the saturnalia: our chimney-sweepers and milk-maids retain the reliques of the feast of Flora, and our may-poles may be traced to the most disgraceful rites in the heathen mythology. Tradition fluctuates, ceremonies are retained, but the intention of them is lost: and frequently the hand of power interferes to render them an engine for darkening the understanding and enslaving the minds of the people. Your lordship joins with the church of England in affording me a very striking instance in confirmation of my position, and you have not scrupled to stigmatise a ceremony held in the highest

veneration by the great majority of european christians, with the name of fables dangerous, deceitful, and blasphemous *.

Between seventeen and eighteen hundred years ago at one of the festivals, on which the jewish nation appeared at Jerusalem, a man carrying a pitcher of water on his head was met in the streets by two persons, who followed him home; and, requesting the use of his guest-room for their master, were conducted by him to an upper chamber, where they made the customary preparations for a company of thirteen persons. In the evening the company met, the supper was served up, of which the principal dishes were lamb and sour herbs or a sallad, and the guests lie round according to the custom of the east on carpets. There were certain peculiarities in this supper, which were instituted about fifteen hundred years before, and are at this day scrupulously observed by the jews: they renewed serious reflections in every mind, which in the present company were increased by the mixture of joy and sorrow visible in the countenance of their master, and the anxiety of his guests on hearing, that in this chosen party witness to his innumerable acts of greatness and goodness one was a traitour,

* Vol. II. p. 510, 511.

During supper the master took the unleavened bread a kind of biscuit; and, having to the usual blessing added some words of his own, distributed it among his guests: in the same manner he took a cup filled with wine, and, adding as before to the usual benediction other words of his own, gave it to his guests to drink *. To those actions full of grace and truth he added another expressive of the utmost condescension and love †: and, after the most endearing expressions and the kindest instructions from a departing friend, the company retired from the house, the flock in a few minutes to be scattered, the shepherd to be betrayed into the hands of wicked priests, and to suffer on the next day the pains of a most ignominious death.

The simple transaction above-mentioned has given rise, my lord, to folios innumerable: every part of it has been the subject of dispute, and christians seem to have vied with each other in perverting the assurances of our saviour's love into the marks of the bitterest hatred. How are we to receive the bread and wine? At some places sitting, at others standing, at others kneeling is the custom. The advocates

* Mat. xxvi. 17 to 36. Mark xiv. 12 to 32. Luke xxii. 7 to 39. 1 Cor. xi. 23 to 27.

† John xiii. to 21.

for these different customs abuse and ill-treat each other for their obstinacy, and as if to convince them all of their folly it seems that none of them appear to be in the right, for our saviour and his disciples were neither sitting, standing nor kneeling at their supper, but according to the custom of the east lying down on carpets. The bread and wine were handed round at a supper in a private house. For many ages altars have been erected in christian churches, lamps and tapers placed lighted around them in the middle of the day: with a thousand genuflexions and prayers and the perfuming and the handing up and down of the bread and wine a brilliant ceremony is performed: the people adore the bread and the wine, which are supposed now to be the body and blood of god: the performer drinks the whole of the wine and swallows the bread. At certain times and in certain places this hallowed bread was carried round in processions, when they, who did not kneel before it, were knocked down by the mob, and cast into prison. The dress of the altar disappears: no more lamps, no more tapers: a modest table-cloth covers a plain table separated by rails from the body of the church: a more modest garb decorates the performer of the ceremony: he kneels before the table, places his hands on some bread and wine, repeats with some prayers the words of our sa-

viour, and gives to each of his audience a small morsel of bread and a sip of the wine. In another place the table is longer, and a company of men and women is seen sitting around it: one among them breaks some bread repeating the words of our saviour and distributes it to the company: in the same manner he sends round a cup of wine of which each person having partaken, the whole company join in prayers and hymns suited to the occasion.

In these different modes two things deserve notice: there is not in either of them the least appearance of a meal; and they do not follow the original institution in the time of day set apart for their respective rites. Our saviour was at supper in the evening: these societies adopt the middle of the day, and in general their rites are performed in the morning service before or in the afternoon service after dinner.

But after all, my lord, what is this rite? On the one hand I hear it called a sacrifice, on the other a supper, and your lordship tells me it is a feast upon a sacrifice *. If it is a sacrifice I can readily acknowledge the propriety of a priest, an altar, and an incense pot: but I do not see any of these things in the upper

* Vol. II. p. 507.

room at Jerusalem. If it is a feast upon a sacrifice, how are the catholicks so much to blame for calling it a sacrifice, and why do I not see the least semblance of feasting among the partakers of the feast? Surely, my lord, you bear a little too hard upon the catholicks, when you term their sacrifice of masses, "fables and dangerous deceits?" Has your feast upon a sacrifice so good a foundation in scripture as the sacrifice of the catholicks? It is not, I am sure, the doctrine of the church of England, and the conceit appears to me more ridiculous than even that of the church of Rome can possibly be in the eyes of your lordship. Perhaps your lordship really means an imaginary feast upon an imaginary sacrifice: and then your imaginary feasting will serve just as usefully to confound the understanding of the divine, as the similar conceit of imaginary quantities, which we imbibed in the bosom of our *alma mater* *, and which still harasses those mathematicians, who swerving from the first principles of their science adopt the idle conceits of a wild imagination instead of the simple deductions of truth. But why should we be anxious to invent new names,

* See my Principles of Algebra, first part, pages ix to xiii. 89. Second part, page viii. x. Appendix by Francis Maseres esq. F.R.S. cursitor-baron of his majesty's court of exchequer, page 518.

when we have plain terms suited to the occasion? Away with these fond inventions, this sacrifice, this feast upon a sacrifice! the rite is simply the breaking of bread and drinking of wine in memory of a similar transaction at the last supper, of which our saviour partook with his apostles, and in which we recognise his love to the world and the blessings derived to mankind by the piercing of his body and the shedding of his blood on the cross.

I remain with due respect, &c.

LETTER X.

Invasion of the king's prerogative—attempt to restore it—objections to the perpetuity of the rite of the lord's supper—use and abuse of it.

MY LORD,

THE lord's supper is called by the catholicks a sacrifice, and by some fanciful divines of the church of England a feast upon a sacrifice: but it remained for the genius of the seventeenth century to find a connection between the token of a saviour's love to all mankind and the prerogative of the king of Great Britain. The great assembly of the nation declared, that the king's appointment to certain places should be null and void, unless the person appointed should within a certain time make one at the feast upon the sacrifice; or in other words eat bread and drink wine with the minister in his church on celebrating the lord's supper. What a wonderful change! The saviour of mankind gives a blessing to bread and wine, and within the space of eighteen hundred years this blessing becomes a token of separation—to neglect this feast is fatal—the king's sign manual carries the

unwilling guest to a table, at which the distributer of the viands is equally unwilling to receive and unable to reject him. The mass is stigmatised by your lordship with the epithet of blasphemy, and if the catholicks err their errour arises from the desire of doing honour to their saviour's institution: what epithet will your lordship bestow on a profanation of the rite, whether sacrifice, feast or supper, to a merely political purpose?

Not many years ago an application was made to the house of commons to restore to the king the enjoyment of his undoubted prerogative; and the history of that application affords a striking instance of the perseverance of two parties in opposing each other, when the petitioners were soliciting what it was the interest of the adversaries not only to grant without any solicitation, but to be the first to solicit themselves. I enter not, my lord, into the political disputes, which at that time agitated two contending factions, nor shall I here state the secret argument of the laborious baronet in the Lollard's tower, which had more weight than all the speeches in the lower house, and all the resolutions and fine reasonings out of the house. Suffice it, that the church was victorious, and gained a loss: her enemies were defeated, and gained an accession of strength. This is appa-

rently a paradox; but you, my lord, will be able to solve it, by considering the real state of that society, into whose most private meetings a stranger is empowered to introduce himself without any regard for the purpose of the meeting, and induced for the sake of pecuniary emolument to bear part in a ceremony, which he holds in contempt. The natural consequence is, that the influence of such meetings must daily decrease, and a society cannot maintain its discipline against such an intrusion.

But these political concerns we will leave, my lord, to the politicians: the christian feels it of more importance to ascertain whether the last supper of our saviour in Jerusalem binds the present race to imitate any part of his conduct at that supper. Many persons think it unnecessary, and they argue in this manner. Our saviour's blessing of the bread and wine took place at the passover supper, and introduced only a peculiar mode of blessing the bread and wine at that supper: if the supper itself then is abolished, a peculiarity in the mode of celebrating that supper must also be necessarily abolished. Again the instituter of every rite intended to last for a great length of time is peculiar in his commands upon that subject. Thus in the institution of the passover supper Moses is very careful to instruct the jews in the

mode of its celebration, and gives very precise orders for its perpetual observation. The blessing of the bread and wine is recorded only as an incident by the historians of our saviour's life; the command to do the same at any other time is not mentioned by the two historians, who sat at table with him; and of the other two historians one only mentions the command. The command recorded is very simple; Do ye this in remembrance of me; and if we combine the actions of our saviour when he spoke these words with the actions of the apostles, who were eating at that time, the position that the command referred only to persons eating the passover-supper seems to be strengthened. Do ye the same thing, when I am gone; and when ye eat this supper remember me in the blessing of the bread and the wine. If this is a well-founded argument, much light is thrown on St. Paul's account of this supper, the celebration of which would naturally cease on the destruction of Jerusalem, when christian societies were firmly established, and the jewish rites fallen into disuse. Again, in the ordaining of this rite our saviour speaks only to his apostles; Do ye this: and does not extend the command to the future christian world. But what weighs more with me and deserves some attention from every enquirer, is the very remarkable omission in one of the four gospels, not only of the command,

but of every circumstance relative to the bread and the cup; and the singularity of this omission seems greater on considering the character of the writer. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and at this very supper he laid his head near to his lord's bosom: he outlived all the other apostles, and did not publish his gospel, composed evidently for the use of the gentile christians, till after the destruction of Jerusalem: he also alone records the washing of the feet of the disciples, which according to the words of our saviour was an example given to them to follow. The supposed perpetuity of the lord's supper rests on these words in Luke; Do ye this in remembrance of me: a command as absolute is given in John; I have set you an example, that what I have done, ye should do also: yet no one obeys this latter command, and there is no dispute on the perpetuity of the rite of feet-washing.

On the supposition that the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine were appropriated to the passover supper, and consequently to the jewish christians, the omission of the blessing of the bread and cup by John is easily explained. It was not necessary to inform every christian of that circumstance, for it was merely a jewish ceremony: but the other action, the washing of the disciples' feet, gave a

lesson, in which all christians are interested, and which they have at all times too little regarded. John died at a very great age, when he could utter, it is said, no other words than these to his society; Little children love one another: where this love is it is of less importance whether we break bread and drink wine together, but, if this love is away all the bread and the wine in the world cannot compensate for its absence.

I have stated, my lord, some arguments, which, if they do not overthrow the necessity of continuing the rite, teach us at least to moderate our censures against those, who from principle abstain from celebrating the lord's supper. Let it be our business to attend more to the spirit than the form of the institution; and, as long as you think it necessary to adhere to the rite, be careful, my lord, to preserve it from abuse; let it be the sign of a saviour's love to mankind not the badge of a party.

I remain with due respect, &c.

LETTER XI.

Unchristian disputes on the trinity—jewish opinions of the oneness of god—belief nominal or real—archbishop Secker—artist's widow—hindoo trinity.

MY LORD,

THE disputes on the doctrine of the trinity have been among christians productive of so much unchristian conduct, that fresh discussion seems to be much deprecated; and very sanguine hopes are entertained, that a word, which is not to be found in the scriptures, will soon cease to be used by all, who profess to believe in them. A very great majority of the christian world has believed in the trinity, and from a very early period: it has been supported in most countries by various kinds of penalties: and it is now impugned with different degrees of success in every quarter of the globe. The grounds for the belief or the rejection of this doctrine have been within the two last centuries repeatedly laid before the publick: and your lordship is to be highly commended for presenting to us your opinion of the be-

lief and arguments of the church of England on this much controverted topick. It would be irksome to go over the whole of this dispute; to battle text against text and opinion against opinion; to enquire into the precise time, when the doctrine in its present form made its appearance, and to drag forth from their peaceful abodes the early fathers, in whose lumbering folios divines may at leisure find abundant resources for every opinion, which the capriciousness of fancy, the desire of applause, or views of preferment, may lead them to support. I shall content myself with a few observations only on your lordship's mode of reasoning, which seems likely to meet with resistance not only from the opposers but from the believers of the doctrine of the trinity.

According to your interpretation of the first part of the first article of the church of England you agree with me, my lord, in believing, that there is only one god: but in common with many other persons your lordship has not perhaps contemplated the extent of that belief. When the scriptures say, that jehovah is god, that there is only one jehovah, and that his glory cannot be given to another, oneness or individuality is ascribed to god in opposition to the opinion of the great bulk of mankind, who have entertained notions of a mixed government in heaven, and ascribed to various beings the

attributes, which are and can be concentrated only in jehovah. The jews, of whose religion the oneness of god has ever been the peculiar feature, express themselves on this subject with singular precision. In applying the term one, they say, to any object whatsoever except god, the mind can conceive the existence of another object similar to that in contemplation. Thus when we say, one tree, one horse, one man, one monster, one sun, one earth, we can conceive the existence of another tree, another horse, another man, another monster, another sun, another earth: but, when we say that god is one object, it is impossible to conceive the existence of another object endued with his properties. Thus eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, &c. are attributes o god; but these attributes cannot possibly exist in two objects, whether under the name of person, substance, or essence, or any other name, which a metaphysical theology may choose to adopt. For there is no unity or oneness in the world similar to that, by which god is denoted: the oneness of a created object implies either more objects of the same kind in actual existence or the possibility of their being in existence: the oneness of god excludes the possibility of conceiving another object to have any one of his properties. Thus god is all-powerful, and this attribute cannot possibly exist

or be conceived to exist in two different objects. Again, the oneness of god excludes the possibility of division. Of all other objects we may say, that one portion is equal to another, or that different properties separable the one from the other may make up the object. But it is not so with god, he cannot be divided or separated: he is absolutely one undivided essence, person, or substance; and no one, who understands the nature of his incommunicable properties, can possibly conceive them to exist in more than one person, substance, or essence, so that these persons, substances or essences should make a twofold, threefold, fourfold, or manifold god. Jehova is a single person, to whom nothing in nature can be likened, and from whom all the beings ever known unto man derived their existence.

Your lordship maintains a different opinion, and though convinced in your own mind with the jews, that there is only one god, you conceive that there are three persons with equal attributes of divinity to be worshipped; that the union of these persons under the name of the holy, blessed, and glorious trinity is also to be worshipped; and you are strengthened in this opinion by the kind of trinity adored by the hindoos from a very remote antiquity. There are two sorts of belief, my lord, the one nomi-

nal, the other real: the nominal very common, the real very rare. The nominal is an assent to a proposition without sufficient examination of the agreement or disagreement of its terms: and, if the terms have been united together by persons of reputed learning, rank, or character, and besides a degree of credit or profit is attached to the uniting together of the terms in the same manner, this nominal belief will be embraced by the great mass in every country, and the persons labouring under it will be shocked at a proposition being put in terms, to which they have not been accustomed. Thus the daily and annual motion of the sun was at one time the belief universal almost of mankind; and, when a philosopher asserted, that the earth moved, the proposition shocked the orthodox, and the heretick expiated his pretended crime in the inquisition. Nature abhors a vacuum was another grand article of faith or instance of credulity: and, thence the quicksilver was supported in the weather-glass and the water in our pumps, by a mysterious union of very nice qualities, till repeated experiments and the common sense of mankind had driven this absurd jargon out of the heads of the philosopher and the divine. Belief is real, when the agreement or disagreement of the terms of a proposition is clearly perceived by the mind: by which it is not meant, that we should have an adequate idea of

either term, but merely of the circumstances, in which they are compared together. Thus god is not man. It is impossible to form an adequate idea of god, but we know enough both of man and god to understand, that immortality the essential property of the one is incompatible with mortality the essential property of the other. The dead shall be restored again to life. We may really believe this proposition, though we cannot form any notion of the future appearance of the dead: but we know what death is, what life is, and the fact we believe upon the credit of revelation. Real belief implies a complete knowledge of the relation of the terms to each other: hence it has been well observed, that no one can possibly believe what he does not comprehend; and there are some curious phenomena attending the nature of these beliefs, which cannot be unknown to your lordship, for the real shall be often taken for a nominal and the nominal for a real believer.

It was once a question, whether archbishop Secker believed a single tittle of christianity, and after his great rise in the church his character was treated with some degree of levity in a company, where he was defended by an accurate observer of mankind, whose intellectual powers, freedom from vulgar prejudices, and originality of thought, are not only not often found in per-

sons of his rank and property, but have been seldom surpassed by the philosophers of antient or modern times. In the socratick manner he thus began the apology. A barrister sometimes pleads with great zeal and eloquence in support of his client, does he not? He does. The barrister perhaps knew nothing of his client, or may have had a prejudice against him, before he took the cause in hand; and probably did not care in the least whether his cause was right or wrong: might it not be so? It is sometimes the case. The barrister, who entered with so apparent earnestness into the cause, has sometimes been known to be really in earnest for it, when he is out of court. Has not this sometimes been the case? It has. What induced the barrister to enter at all into the cause? Was it not the fee, the credit for his eloquence, the silk gown in prospect, the peerage in the back ground? These things assuredly had an influence. Only conceive then; if fifty guineas set upon a brief shall with the other concomitants produce such an effect upon the tongue of the barrister, and eventually upon his head, what must be the effect of a fee of ten thousand pounds a year? What must be the effect of rank next to the blood royal? What must be the effect of sermons, so impressive on an audience, at last on the preacher's own mind? It may be true, that the archbishop attended at one period of

his life more to midwifery than to his bible, but for a number of years the whole turn of his mind has been bent one way, and it is not irrational to suppose, that the united powers of fees, of rank, of credit, have at last led him to believe, that every thing he utters from the pulpit is the truth and nothing but the truth.

Habit, my lord, has a wonderful effect upon the human mind, and he, who began by being a hypocrite, may end in embracing the counterfeit for a reality. An artist's widow not long ago was recommended to lay out the small benefaction, which she had received from his society, in such wares, as might find purchasers among the good sisters of the tabernacle; and to promote the sale was advised to frequent the meeting, to sob when they sobbed, to groan when they groaned, and to take particular care, that her sobs and groans should be the loudest of all in her bench. The poor widow curtesied; thanked her friend for his advice; whose last words, when she left the room, were, be sure to sob and groan well. She went to the tabernacle, sobbed and groaned; her neighbours were affected; consoled her; dealt with her: she sold all her goods, and returned with glee to tell the joyful news to her adviser. He was delighted with her success; applauded himself for his advice; encouraged her to continue in this notable

career. She excelled in sobbing and groaning, and her trade flourished. But sobbing and groaning could not be incessant: first one word then another from the pulpit caught her attention—she does not sob and groan so loud—she is awakened to a sense of her condition—she abhors her hypocrisy—she sighs in real earnest—she embraces that faith, which she had treated with contempt. The last visit to her patron was made with a view, which proved the sincerity of her repentance rather than a knowledge of the world. Well, Mary, said he, does your trade flourish? Very well, sir, thank god. And you continue to go to the tabernacle? I never miss it. That's right, that's right; and do you sob and groan too as loud as ever? Not quite so loud, sir; for I have too much reason to sob and groan in earnest, and I wish you would give me leave——Oho! good woman, is it so? You have become I see as great a fool as your neighbours. Go about your business; I am sorry that I wasted my advice upon you. The good woman retired, contented to be a fool in this wiseman's estimation, and valued with reason a sigh in the tabernacle at a higher price than all the honours of the academy.

The nature then, my lord, of belief might lead us to very curious enquiries; and this century may perhaps verify the prediction of Bayle, and

determine, whether the belief in the trinity of the majority in Europe is real or nominal. From external evidence we should be led to adopt the latter term: for this opinion has been hedged round with pains and penalties; its opposers have been subjected to disgrace, imprisonment, punishment, death. Hence it should seem, that the arguments in its favour were weak. The supporters of the doctrine have maintained it in palaces, with high titles, great influence, accumulated riches and splendour. These are things inducing an opinion upon little or no argument. The majority has embraced this opinion; for examination was precluded by terrour, and indolence lulled into security by the rewards annexed to acquiescence.

But the hindoo trinity has it seems great weight with your lordship. Had I, my lord, compared the trinity of the christians with so monstrous a fiction, I should justly have incurred the suspicion of jesting upon sacred subjects. What does this hindoo fiction prove? The same as the monstrous fictions of the grecian mythology. They alike manifest the deplorable state of mankind unaided by the light of revelation. The indefatigable industry of Mr. Maurice, whose works so well deserve the patronage of your lordship and of every friend to science, has been well employed in bringing to light the

follies of the hindoo worship, and illustrating from eastern records the chronology and geography of scripture: but had his invaluable researches been carried still higher, they must have proved insufficient in the main point, the connection between revelation and this absurdest of trinities. The reason is, my lord, that the original revelations are in our possession contained in the book of Genesis, were consigned to the care of the jewish nation, have come down safely and entirely to us; and, if the hindoo notion of the trinity is really sanctioned by revelation, some kind of trinity must have been revealed to mankind in the book of Genesis.

In my next letter, my lord, we will enter upon this enquiry: and in the mean time I must leave your lordship to form a distinct idea of the oneness ascribed to Jehova in the old, and to the god and father of Jesus Christ in the new testament.

With great respect,

I remain, &c.

LETTER XII.

Erroneous judgement—singular use of language instanced in the Norfolk dialect—did not lead the jews into errour—and is not an apology for the sons of Japhet.

MY LORD,

I HAVE been so much accustomed to dogmatical insult from men without study or knowledge for opinions, on which I have exerted the utmost of my abilities, that I now receive with a smile many positive assertions scarcely inferiour in the writer's eye to gospel veracity. With this temper of mind I read a remark in your book, which followed your lordship's summing up of the arguments in favour of Christ's equal sovereignty in heaven. "When all these things," your lordship observes, "are laid together in "that variety of expressions, in which they lie "scattered in the new testament, it is not pos-"sible to retain any reverence for these books, "if we imagine that they are written in a style "so full of approaches to the deifying of a mere "man, that without a very critical studying of "languages and phrases, it is not possible to

" understand them otherwise*." Had I, my lord, used such an expression, what an inundation of calumny would have overwhelmed me? Suppose me to sum up the arguments in favour of the oneness of god, and at the conclusion to make this remark. " When all these things are laid " together in that variety of expressions, in " which they lie scattered in both the old and " the new testament, it is not possible to retain " any reverence for these books, if we imagine, " that they are written in a style not only full of ap- " proaches to the making of but absolutely mak- " ing god one person in exclusion to all others, " that without a very critical studying of lan- " guages and phrases it is not possible to un- " derstand them otherwise." Had I used this language, my lord, I should justly have deserved censure, for presuming to judge other men by the standard of my own opinions. Opposite opinions have been derived from the scriptures by persons, who hold them in equal reverence, and I should think myself uncandid in the extreme, if, from your lordship's mistakes of the sense of scripture, I should infer, that you had not the due degree of reverence for those writings, by which every christian ought to be guided.

It is singular also, my lord, that you should

* Vol. II. p. 126.

introduce this "critical studying of languages "and phrases," and that your very first argument in favour of the trinity should depend on a grammatical nicety and a critical investigation of the hebrew language. Your lordship finds the trinity in the first verse of Genesis *, because forsooth a noun plural in the hebrew language is joined to a verb singular, and the english reader is to rest his faith upon your lordship's "critical studying of languages and phrases." I used formerly and your lordship probably continues to be much in company with Norfolk men, who from a peculiarity of dialect, when they speak in the third person, join in the present tense a noun in the singular to a verb in the plural. Thus they say, George do love Susan, not George loves Susan; Nelson fight well, not Nelson fights well: but they mean exactly the same as other englishmen, who use singular nouns with singular verbs. Now, if a man of Kent should after making the tour of Norfolk, return back to his countrymen with the notable discovery, that the Norfolk admiral was one admiral indeed, but that in this admiral several persons were united, he would probably meet with the same reception as the Norfolk man coming into our county to find the village, where all the men in consequence of an old bishop's curse have long tails affixed to their posteriours.

* Vol. II. p. 74.

The expression of the Norfolk men, and the expression in the first verse of Genesis, are idioms of speech, and both may probably be accounted for in a similar manner. I was one day carelessly turning over a folio, in which was, I think, Ingulph's relation of the incursions of the Danes into this country, of whom a great number by his account were by compact settled in Norfolk. This circumstance led me to reconsider the peculiarity of the Norfolk dialect, and on examining the danish grammar, I found, that it was no solecism in Denmark but the regular structure of the danish language. A similar circumstance, at this distance of time not so easily ascertained, may have occasioned the peculiarity in the hebrew language; and a greater insight into the languages of Africa, where alam is still in many parts the name for god, will perhaps afford a clue to us in future researches.

Let us leave then, my lord, to the grammarians this grammatical discussion. The mode of god's existence is not to be altered by an idiom of speech; especially as the very term is applied by himself to a man. Jehovah calls Moses god elohim to Aaron and to Pharaoh. The word is applicable to others beside the supreme being, because it refers to superiority in power and strength: and the passage in Genesis quoted by

your lordship for a very different purpose may perhaps explain to us the nature of the term. I will transcribe your lordship's words. "A plu-" ral is joined to a verb plural as in Gen. xxxv. 7. "And Jacob called the name of the place Beth-" el, because the gods the reappeared to him." Now if the term the gods is taken in the heathen acceptation, and they really appeared to Jacob, he must contrary to all opinions of the patriarchal religion have believed in a plurality of gods. But let us examine this passage, not with any parade of criticism but according to the plainest common sense, which will I believe be sufficient for the purpose. Jacob called the name of the place Beth-el a house of god not Beth-elohim a house of gods, because the gods the elohim there appeared unto him. The mode of this appearance is described in the 28th chapter the tenth and following verses. Jacob in a dream saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and wonderful personages moving up and down this ladder: and from its top came the voice of Jehovah to him. Jacob, naturally astonished at this dream, cries out on waking: surely Jehovah is in this place—this is really a house of elohim—this is the gate of heaven—and he made a vow that Jehovah should be elohim to him, and the pillar should be an house of elohim for him. In the above passage all the persons whom Jacob saw in his vision

were elohim employed by Jehovah in his messages to man in the same manner as Moses was elohim to Aaron and Pharaoh. It is said Gen. xxxv. 7. the elohim appeared to Jacob, and the verb is plural, because he saw a number of them in his dream: and as in these early ages revelations were made in various ways to man, and this was a striking representation of the mode of god's government, it appears to me, that the writer of the first chapter of Genesis had this very representation in view, when he describes in the 26th verse the formation of Adam: and I do not see any reason for supposing it improper to use on such an occasion the expression we will make man, than to use the imagery in the dream of Jacob and the vision of Micai-jah in the first book of kings, xxii. 16.

The first chapter of Genesis with the three first verses of the second chapter forms perhaps the oldest book in the world. Moses made it the beginning of his work to shew the jews, that the objects of worship among surrounding nations were not elohim but the works of elohim, and this elohim in the subsequent part of Genesis is in general mentioned by his appropriate name Jehovah. The necessity of this instruction is evident from the frequent revolts of the jews and their worshipping of other elohim besides Jehovah: but the true worshippers ad-

dressed their prayers to Jehovah alone, and had not the least conception that they could agreeably with their law unite any other person with him in religious worship.

But let us suppose, my lord, that your strange and fanciful meaning of elohim had been generally received by the heathen, and allowed by those who enjoyed the light of revelation. What an excellent apologist you now become for all the follies of the heathen worship! If elohim in the first verse of Genesis refers to several persons, there may be as well three hundred as three gods: for your lordship cannot pretend to say, that before the deluge there was the least intimation of the number being confined to two, three, three hundred, or three thousand. If Noah came out of the ark with this notion of a number of persons making up his god, he must still have been in ignorance to what number they amounted, and his posterity to the time of and at the dispersion must have remained in equal ignorance. How pardonable then were our forefathers, the sons of Japhet, in filling their heaven with their Wodens, their Freyas, their Thors, their Sethers, and our uncles of a more polished taste with their Jupiters, their Junos, their Venuses, and their Apollos! The fables of Greece and the romances of Scandinavia may claim with your fictions from Hindoos-

tan equal relationship with revelation. The same apology would be made by all the believers in these idle dreams. We learned from revelation that god was made up of several persons: with the precise number we were never made acquainted. But, my lord, I am ashamed of this trifling upon a word, and when I find that elohim is translated by the greeks, latins, and english by the proper word for god in their respective languages, and that the pronoun I is constantly used by god in his addresses to the jews, I am convinced that this argument of a plurality from a plural termination was introduced by a mere sciolist in the hebrew language, and is adopted by those who, having imbibed a prejudice, catch at every straw to support them in so untenable a position.

I remain, with great respect, &c.

LETTER XIII.

Search after the trinity in the new testament—three passages examined—nine persons in the trinity—trinity not found by the bishop in either old or new testament.

MY LORD,

IF the doctrine of the trinity was known to mankind under the old testament dispensations, your lordship has been very unfortunate in not finding a single trace of it in the jewish scriptures: with what success you have entered upon this pursuit in the new testament, shall be the object of our present enquiry. Three passages, of which the first is the baptismal form, are your authorities. In the precept for baptism it is said, that the heathen were to be baptised into the name of the father the son and the holy spirit, and I readily allow to your lordship, that three persons or things are mentioned in this expression: that either of them is god does not appear from the expression, but is and must be deduced from other passages, in which their names occur. Thus we know that the supreme being is intended by our saviour under the name of father, that by son is meant himself, and by

the holy spirit that powerful energy, which enabled the apostles to execute the divine commands. But nothing is here said of the equality of these persons, or even that they all are persons, and consequently this passage cannot be brought as a proof of a trinity: but if a trinity is proved, which your lordship as yet has not done from other places of scripture, then this verse implies, that the heathens were to be initiated into this faith: if no such trinity is to be found in other parts of scripture, this solitary text is of no avail; and indeed the form is, we find, adopted by both believers and disbelievers of the trinity.

Your practice from the early ages is of no weight; for unfortunately your lordship has forgotten to insert in the margin the ages of the fathers, whom you have quoted upon this occasion: Ambrose, Tertullian, Basil, Jerome, Cyprian, Didymus, Athanasius are not to be depended upon for the first fifty years after the death of Peter, and if they were, their opinions practice are not binding upon the present generation. I admire your lordship's estimation of the ages, in which these gentlemen* lived, which you term "the purest ages of the christian church;" for if the present times are bad, not one of your lordship's brethren on the bench

* Vol. II. p. 88.

or in the approaching conclave will suffer in comparison with Athanasius, and the factions of the christians in his time were carried on with not less rancour than has in our days been apparent in Europe.

But to return to our subject: the trinity is not to be found in the baptismal form; and for the same reason your lordship fails in the next passage produced in favour of this doctrine: The grace of our lord Jesus Christ and the love of god, and the communion of the holy spirit be with you. In this passage Christ is not called god but lord, and the holy spirit is not called either god or lord. As before if it can be proved from any other part of scripture that Christ is god as well as lord, and that the holy spirit is a person and that person god, this passage may be brought as an instance of the mode of applying the doctrine of the trinity. In itself it is no proof of that doctrine: it is equally allowed by the believers and disbelievers of the doctrine to make part of scripture, is explained by them in different manners, and read in their religious societies.

The third and last passage quoted by your lordship contains so curious an attempt at proof, that your lordship will not, I almost persuade myself, on farther examination suffer it to

stand in a future edition of your work. From the blessing of one we are led to that of another apostle: "Grace and peace from him which is "and which was and which is to come, and "from the seven spirits which are before his "throne, and from Jesus Christ*." These words are explained by your lordship in the following manner: "Here the father is de-"scribed by a periphrasis taken from his attri-"bute of eternity, and the seven spirits is a "mystical expression for the holy ghost, used "upon this occasion, either because the saluta-"tion is addressed to seven churches, every "one of which had partaken of the spirit, or "because seven was a sacred number among "the jews, denoting both variety and perfection, "and in this case alluding to the various gifts, "administrations and operations of the holy "ghost†." Very mystical indeed, my lord! the holy ghost is one spirit, and seven being a sacred number, or there being seven churches seven spirits are one spirit. This is not all: the seven spirits, who are before the throne of god, are also one spirit upon the throne. For the holy ghost being god, and god being upon the throne, the holy ghost is upon the throne, and consequently the seven spirits are both before and upon the throne. Surely, my lord, when you were moderater at Cambridge, such syllo-

* Vol. II. p. 89. † Ib. p. 90.

gisms would have excited a smile in your schools, and you would have retorted in this manner upon the disputant. According to this mode of arguing there ceases to be a trinity, and instead of it we must substitute the square of the trinity: for you now assert, that seven spirits together with the father and the son are god, and consequently we have nine persons or three times three persons to be worshipped. But scripture, my lord, does not deal with us so mystically: whatever may be designed by the throne and the apparatus before the throne, the seven spirits before the throne cannot be mistaken for the being on the throne; they are entirely distinct from him and are ministers only of his will. If you will give yourself the trouble, my lord, of consulting the fifth chapter of Revelations and the sixth verse, you will see that these spirits are represented as having been sent by god unto all the earth—in the third chapter and first verse, as being together with seven stars held by him who speaks to the church of Sardes—and in the fourth chapter and fifth verse, as being seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of god. Consequently, my lord, I cannot allow your seven spirits to be one spirit, nor seven lamps of fire burning before the throne of god to be god himself upon his throne.

It appears then, my lord, that you have not produced a single proof in favour of the doctrine of the trinity. Your argument from the old testament of a plurality of persons rests upon a grammatical quiddity, and if allowed would not establish your doctrine: for you would gain by it only, that there might be three, or three hundred, or three thousand, or three hundred thousand persons each equally god; and it remains to be proved, that Christ and the holy spirit are either of them one of these persons. In this latter enquiry I am prepared to attend your lordship, though it seems to me at present to have but little tendency towards the establishing of your doctrine. In a future letter we will enter upon this point, and I now take my leave of your lordship not without hopes, that you will reconsider your assertions on the doctrine of the trinity, and place them in a less questionable shape before your future readers.

I remain with great respect, &c.

LETTER XIV.

Jesus not god before he was thirty years old—made himself god afterwards if we believe the jews—denies that he ever made himself god—the jews put him to death against their law.

MY LORD,

JESUS of Nazareth lived for nearly thirty years among his countrymen, in which time he was not considered by them as god: and on his appearance as the Christ the son of god promised to them in their law they treated him with contempt, and were offended at his pretending to be superiour to themselves in knowledge, wisdom, and virtue. There is no reason to suppose that in the first thirty years of his life Jesus affected to be god: did he in the remainder of his life make those pretensions, which would have subjected him either to be treated as a madman or to be stoned to death? Your lordship thinks, that he really made these pretensions, and as a proof alledges the opinion and conduct of the jews with whom he was at certain times conversing.

Your lordship argues in this manner. The jews attempted to kill Jesus, because he had called god his peculiar father, thus making himself like or equal to god; that is for blasphemy, because he being a man made himself god. The question then is, whether these jews rightly apprehended or wilfully perverted our saviour's meaning: your lordship is of the former, I embrace the latter opinion. Among other circumstances this weighs conclusively with me. The jews, especially their priests, were anxious to find some specious cause for putting Jesus to death; and, when by the treachery of an apostle they had secured his person, they endeavoured by perjured witnesses to prove him a criminal: but all their attempts failed, and nothing could be alledged against him on which to ground a capital accusation. Now had the jews been really convinced, that our saviour called himself god; the persons, who had heard such an assertion, would without doubt have been brought forward, and a charge of blasphemy might have been framed in a regular manner against the prisoner. The want of such a charge is a sufficient proof, that the jews no more believed that he called himself god, than they did that he was a madman, and had a devil, when they uttered these passionate and wicked expressions against him. The language of a mob in a passion is surely a strange foundation for an argument: yet

your lordship has the same authority for believing Jesus a madman, as you have that he called himself god.

It is singular also, my lord, that in this instance you should have overlooked our saviour's reply, which is given by the apostle John at such length, that it might seem almost intended to prevent christians from adopting these jewish slanders. You accuse me of making myself god, says our saviour, John v. 19 to 47, but so far from such a pretension, I tell you plainly that I can of myself do nothing. My power is derived entirely from the father, who has committed certain things to my care and judgment. The miracles, which I have performed, tell you plainly, that the father has sent me, in whose name not in my own I am come unto you. Can language be more explicit than this? and our saviour is equally decisive, when the jews renew their slanders. On our saviour's assertion, that his father, who had given to him a flock of sheep, was greater than all, and no one could take them out of his hand, adds; I and the father are one—not one god, for the language does not admit of such an addition, but one as to the circumstance then mentioned, namely, the power of preserving the flock. This flock could not be taken out of the father's hands, for he was greater than all; not out of

the son's hands, for they had been given to him by the father. But the jews did not trouble themselves to enquire into his meaning, take up stones, and are stopped by our saviour's question: for what do ye wish to stone me? They reply, we are going to stone you for blasphemy, because thou being a man makest thyself god. Jesus answers: If I had really as you say called myself a god, I might have been justified even by your own law, in which it is written, I Jehovah have said, ye are gods. How then can ye accuse him of blasphemy, who declares that he was made holy and sent by the father, who did not say that he was god or a god, but only that he was a son of god! If I do not the works of my father, do not believe me: but these works prove, that I am closely united with the father and the father with me. The last expression renews jewish malignity, and he left the enraged people without farther explanation. The question then is, whether Jesus did not give a satisfactory answer to this wicked race? I think he did: for he does not allow that he called himself god—he justifies the use of such an expression from its application by the supreme being to a great number of persons besides himself—he says expressly, that he can of himself do nothing—he draws the obvious distinction between himself and his father—he was sent by the father—he receives a charge

from the father—he never calls himself god but only the son of god. The slanderous jews then, my lord, are not worthy of notice, let us attend only to the language of our saviour.

Be it so your lordship is ready to exclaim, let our saviour's language be our rule, and he expressly adopts the opinion of the jews, and declares himself to be god. The grounds for such an assertion deserve to be examined. The malicious jews, it seems, were at a loss to find an accusation against Jesus, and the high-priest adjures the prisoner, who had kept strict silence during the examination of the witnesses, to declare plainly, whether he was the Christ the son of god or not. Our saviour's answer is given with some little variety of expression by the evangelists and amounts to this: that he was the Christ, the son of god, and that he should hereafter sit on the right hand of power, and come in the clouds of heaven. On this answer your lordship's assertion is founded, yet the distinction is plainly made as in all other places between god and the son of god. For Christ says, that he shall be placed at the right hand of god. To be at the right hand of a person is a very different thing from being the person himself. The priests were naturally eager to put him to death; in an instant they seize this pretext for their crimes; they declare him guilty of blas-

phemy; they hurry him before Pilate, and declare with the utmost impudence, that he was guilty of death by their law, because he made himself the son of god. I am fearful, my lord, that you have not carefully attended to this charge, and suspect that these infamous jews had some excuse for thus slandering an innocent man to their governer; for you say in a note*, "that the jews never thought of punishing with death those imposters, who pretended to be the Christ, and that this claim did not include the crime of blasphemy according to their idea of the Messiah any more than the pretensions to be a prophet did." This is a very bold speech indeed, and particularly so, when we find it expressly declared in the law†, that the pretensions to be a prophet if ill-founded were to be punished with death, and this sentence follows the remarkable passage, in which the Messiah is promised to the sons of Israel. The jewish priests, my lord, were right in telling Pilate, that the sentence against a person making himself or pretending to be the Messiah or the son of god was death, but they forgot to explain to him, that Jesus had given those proofs of being the Messiah or the son of god, which by the same law bound them to submit to his authority. But how can we expect, that a high-priest should listen to the voice of

* Vol. II. 102. † Deut. xviii. 20. Act. iii. 22, 23.

god, uttered by a man of simple manners, in a common garb, and cloathed only with that dignity of character, which in all ages and nations has been by the rich, the noble, and the powerful, held in contempt. With what insult, my lord, the preachers of the methodists, as they are called, are treated in some parts of England: yet the methodists are the true believers of the doctrine in the thirty-nine articles? Worse treatment a great deal did our saviour receive from the priests and pharisees and lawyers* in Judea, and in what capital of Europe would he experience a better fate, if he were at this day to reappear in his wonted manner upon earth?

Our saviour, my lord, was not guilty of blasphemy. I cannot allow that any of the jews ever believed, that he really called himself or supposed himself to be god: the term son of god has a very different meaning and refers to the character, by which he is eminently distinguished from all his brethren, and placed at the head under god of the whole scriptural œconomy.

I remain, with true respect, &c.

* It is singular, that you can seldom obtain a decisive answer from a lawyer to this question: was our saviour's conduct in going through the country, and preaching to the people, a sufficient warrant for his apprehension, trial, and punishment?

LETTER XV.

Son of god an appellation common to a great portion of the human race—Adam and Jesus in a more appropriate manner sons of god—Jesus the son of god—but not the son of himself.

MY LORD,

JESUS is the son of god; Jehovah is god or god of gods. Jesus is the son of Jehovah, consequently he cannot be Jehovah. This title, the son of god, was never considered by the jews as equivalent to that of god or god of gods, and it is incumbent on us to learn from scripture the meaning of the term son of god, and the reason of its being attributed in a peculiar manner to our saviour.

In the history of mankind before the flood we read of the sons of god, and they are now in general supposed to be men of piety descended from Seth, who allured from their duty fell in that corruption of manners, which brought on the destruction of mankind *. The sons of god are mentioned again in the book of Job †,

* Gen. vi. 2. 4. † Job i. 6. ii. 1.

and have given rise to some disputes, but it is sufficient for our purpose, that many persons, whatever they were, have been under the old testament dispensation termed the sons of god. If we come to the new testament we find the same term more familiarly used and bearing as extensive a signification. It is applied by our saviour to all of the human race, who arrive at the blessing of the future life*, by Paul to every godly man on earth†, and to the gentiles becoming christians. I will not accumulate instances, for we have it now sufficiently proved both by the old and the new testament, that many persons have been, are, and may be sons of god.

That the term son of god should be applied in such a manner seems singular to the english reader, who is accustomed to annex to the term son a peculiar mode of relationship: but in the hebrew language, from which this expression is derived, the term son is taken in a much more extensive signification, and is applied not only to relation by descent but to a variety of relations, in which sometimes the notion even of descent is very obscurely figured. Thus wicked men and condemned persons were called sons of Belial, sons of death: a son born in old age was called the son of old age: east countrymen

* Luke xx. 36. † Rom. viii. 14. ix. 26. Gal. iii. 26. iv. 4.

were termed sons of the east, and many similar instances might be produced, if the scripture reader had not continually noticed them in his progress through the bible. Hence a pious virtuous lover of god is properly expressed by the term son of god, and our saviour in allusion to this idiom reprobates the jews for their wickedness: Ye do the works of your father the devil*.

Sons of god, a son of god, the son of god, are all expressions then which may be applied to certain of the human race, who are distinguished from others by godliness and the peculiar approbation of the almighty. It becomes now a question on what account our saviour, who is sometimes in the new testament called a son of god at other times the son of god, is distinguished by the latter appellation? There are two individuals in scripture termed sons of god, who are distinguished from each other and from the rest of mankind by the circumstances attending their coming into existence, Adam and Jesus. Adam is called the son of god, because he had no earthly father and derived his being entirely from an act of god on the womb of earth: Jesus, I am inclined to think, is distinguished by the same epithet, because he had no earthly fa-

* On the term only begotten son of god see particularly the epistle to Philemon, v. 10.

ther, and derived his being from an act of god on the womb of a virgin. According to the hebrew idiom this is a sufficient distinction for calling both the first and the second Adam, the two heads of the human race, sons of god: and I confess myself, that, if this is the primary reason for the appellation the son of god as applied to our saviour, I should choose rather to adhere to it than to defend it on other grounds, which may be derived from scripture. But many from a supposed want of authenticity in the first chapter of Matthew's and the two first of Luke's gospels will not allow of this birth from the virgin, nor the propriety of this mode of applying the term the son of god to our saviour. Disputes on this subject, carried to a greater extent than it deserves, have occasioned a considerable diminution of christian love. A person may be a good christian without believing in this mode of birth: for he may acknowledge Jesus to be the anointed head of the human race, the saviour of mankind, upon the testimonies to which our saviour so frequently appeals and which are recorded in the clearest manner in the history of his mission. On my interpretation the formation of Adam and Jesus dignifies each with the epithet of the son of god; but this epithet does not afford the least ground for either to be conceived as not deriving his existence from god, the one within six the other within two thou-

sand years from the present day. The other ground of applying the term the son of god to our saviour is defensible, because he is the first among many brethren: he is thus peculiarly the son of god, and others are also sons of god from their relationship to their head in the virtues, which adorn his character, and the grace bestowed in different measures upon them: he is also peculiarly the son of god marked out by the spirit at his baptism from all mankind by this distinguishing epithet, which was again confirmed by his resurrection from the dead and being made the first-fruits of them that sleep. In which-ever of these senses, my lord, we take this term, we are equally removed from your lordship's opinion: we distinguish with the scriptures, Jesus the Christ the lamb of god, the son of god, from Jehovah, the supreme, the god and father of Jesus Christ.

In this argument one circumstance is not to be overlooked. Jesus is confessed by your lordship and myself to derive in a peculiar manner his existence from god, and is properly called by us both though on different accounts the son of god. Your lordship believes, that the father the son and the holy ghost are this god: consequently Jesus is according to your lordship the son by nature of the father the son and the holy ghost; that is since the term son is ap-

plied in both cases to our saviour, Jesus is the son of himself. How far this language is justified by scripture I leave your lordship to re-consider, being myself fully satisfied, that there is no ground in revelation for such false reasoning, which arises solely from an errour in your lordship's explanation of the term son of god.

I remain, &c.

LETTER XVI.

Eternity of the earth—form of god—humiliation of god.

MY LORD,

SO much of your lordship's argument for supposing Jesus to be god is taken from the title son of god, that you have little time to dwell upon other texts: but the first chapter of John's gospel is, as I naturally expected, pressed into the service. This chapter is considered as the *crux hæreticorum*, and the moment a person allows as I do the first verse to contain a truth, the retort is instantly made: how can you then deny that John looked upon Jesus as the supreme being? For a very plain reason, I reply. Because John does not say, that Jesus is the supreme being; and, if he meant to convey that notion to us, I have no doubt that he would have expressed it clearly: besides he has told us with what view his book was written, namely, that we should believe Jesus to be the Christ the son of god, and from that belief should

possess* life in his name. But I will not trouble your lordship with my explanation of this chapter: a chapter, which makes the distinction completely between the supreme being and our saviour, and I shall content myself with a remark or two on your lordship's mode of reasoning. "The expression, in the beginning was "the word, must," your lordship says, "mean, "that the word existed from all eternity, that "is, the word of the father was begotten from† "everlasting of the father, since St. John is "referring to times not only prior to the birth "of Christ, but also to the creation of the "world‡." By eternity, my lord, is meant, that which hath neither beginning nor ending: and the existence of the word, which is declared to be in a beginning must according to your lordship be without a beginning. For according to your reading, the word was from all eternity, that is without a beginning: but according to John the word was in the beginning. If this mode of interpretation is allowed, we run into a heresy of which your lordship is not at present aware: for the first chapter of Genesis begins with the same words, In the beginning god

* John xx. 31.

† Epea pteroenta, or the Diversions of Purley, by J. H. Tooke, M. A. 2d ed. p. 344.

‡ Vol. II, p. 109, 110.

created the world; that is, your lordship would say, From all eternity god created the world or in other words, Matter is eternal. The fact is, my lord, that in both cases the words in the beginning refer to the beginning of something; and, whatever your lordship may determine that something to be, its beginning can be only at a finite distance from this point of time, and myriads of such intervals passed before either of these beginnings took place.

Having removed the main stay of your lordship's interpretation of the first chapter in John's gospel it is unnecessary for me to refute it in its separate parts: I proceed to a trite argument, on which much learning has been displayed and abused. Your lordship quotes with the usual confidence a few verses from the exhortation to the Philippians*, in which "the "divinity of Christ both before his incarnation and "after his ascension is, according to your lord-"ship, clearly pointed out: being in the form "of god signifies being really god just as took "upon him the form of a servant and was made "in the likeness of men signifies, that he was "really a man in a low and mean condition: "and the following words—thought it not rob-"bery, to be equal with god—expressly de-

* Philip ii. 6.

"clare Christ's equality with god*." Jesus is said to have been in the form of god. Allowed. So was Adam at his original creation, therefore if this expression makes Jesus the supreme being, Adam must upon the same grounds be also called the supreme being. But Jesus, you say, my lord, thought it not robbery to be equal with god: the scripture in my opinion says no such thing; and now we have both an opportunity of introducing a great deal of greek in support of our respective opinions, making the learned smile, the unlearned stare. Fortunately there is no need for all this parade of learning, for Paul himself sets it out of the question at once by the inference which he has drawn from the high character of Christ, contrasted with his humility. Whatever was the form, whatever was the opinion of Jesus, he acted well; he received the due reward for his meritorious services. On this account the apostle tells us, God hath appointed, that all men should submit to the authority of Christ, should confess Christ to be lord to the glory of god the father. The apostle does not say, that all men should confess Jesus to be god equal to god the father. No such thought entered into his mind, and he makes the same distinction here as in another place: To us there is one god even the father, and one lord Jesus Christ our saviour†. The

* Vol. II. 112. † 1 Cor. viii. 6.

passage then cannot possibly be twisted into your lordship's meaning: the distinction is clearly kept up between the being who confers, and the man who receives honour; and I could not but smile at your lordship's conjecture about human and divine natures at the close of your argument. "This exaltation after his ascension "into heaven seems," says your lordship, "to "indicate the glorified state of his human na- "ture, just as his appearance and suffering up- "on earth were the humiliation of his divine "nature*." Humiliation of divine nature!!!! If by divine nature is meant god, the phrase might seem to require a harsher term than ridiculous. Neither god nor divine nature can be humiliated. He who neither slumbers nor sleeps, whose thoughts are not like our thoughts, cannot be humiliated by the thoughts or actions of weak, depraved, sinful, inconstant mortals.

I remain, &c.

* Vol. II. p. 114, 115.

LETTER XVII.

A spirit brooding over matter not the holy ghost—the holy spirit a thing given—procession of the holy spirit—the holy spirit allowed by the bishop to be a quality.

MY LORD,

TO prove what is vulgarly called the holy ghost to be one in the trinity, two steps are necessary: the first is, to shew that there is such a person as the holy ghost; and secondly, if there is such a person, to ascertain that this person is god. Your lordship found a number of persons to be god from the first verse of Genesis; and the same verse it seems is to give us information on the existence and properties of the holy ghost. We read indeed in the vulgar translation, that the spirit of god moved upon the face of the deep, and by your lordship's more improved translation, that it was brooding on* the face of the deep. I do not object, my lord, to your alteration in this passage, and hope that you will as candidly adopt a slight correction, which a farther inspection of the text

* Vol. II. p. 75.

will convince your lordship is absolutely necessary. I read a spirit not the spirit of god, because it is so in the original, but the distinction between a and the *, a distinction marked as clearly almost in the hebrew as the english language, was too slight to attract the attention of the translaters appointed by royal authority. The verse then, my lord, speaks only of a spirit of god; and of the thousands and tens of thousands ministering round his throne does not even deign to mention its name, quality, or office: nay more, the verse is so refractory that it does not even inform us, that this spirit is endued with reason and understanding. It may have been, and indeed it is more probable, that it was a mere material substance occasioned by and surrounding that vast chaotick mass, to which the supreme intelligence was about to give order, regularity, beauty †.

From this refractory verse I am carried by your lordship to the xivth of John and 16th verse, where Christ says: "I will pray the "father and he shall give you another com-"forter that he may abide in you even the

* Whenever any publick-spirited men are to be found willing to defray the expence of correcting the vulgar translation of the bible, this fault, which runs through every part, will it is hoped be rectified.

† Ps. civ. 2.

"spirit of truth*." Your lordship here makes a stop; but for the better understanding of the passage I must beg leave to take one step farther: "even the spirit of truth, which the world "cannot receive, because the world seeth it not "and knoweth it not†." In the first place your lordship knows, that the relative which, referring to spirit in the verse quoted by myself, cannot be rendered who, because the word in greek meaning spirit is of the neuter gender denoting evidently a thing not a person. Secondly, the word he in the verse quoted by your lordship is not in the original, and you may mislead the english reader by the insertion. Thirdly, the english reader is liable to be misled by the word comforter, which the translators have given for *parakletos*, and instead of referring that word to spirit to determine its nature, because the greek word has a masculine termination, they have made that their guide instead of the substantive to which it refers. Our saviour explains the word *parakletos* himself, and it is also an epithet belonging to himself‡ as well as to the spirit of truth. A man, woman or any material or spiritual substance may be *parakletos* a comforter or advocate: and to discover whether it is a person or a thing, whether we are to apply he or it, we must look to the subject of

* Vol. II. 172. † John xiv. 17. ‡ 1 John ii. 1.

which the word *parakletos* describes the quality*. In this case our saviour has pointed out the subject, namely, the spirit of truth, and the word spirit expresses a thing not a person. The original says, the world seeth it not and knoweth it not. Hence the passage is a decisive proof, that the spirit talked of by Jesus is a thing not a person: a thing for which he prays, a thing which god will send, a thing not to be enjoyed for a moment, but to remain with his chosen friends to their death. How a thing sent by god, and remaining upon earth should be converted into a person, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, it is not necessary for me to account: it is sufficient for my purpose, that this passage affords no clue to the opinion, that the holy ghost is god; and as the other passages quoted by your lordship have evident reference to it, the examination of them is perfectly superfluous.

On the procession of the holy spirit you are, my lord, so very concise, that I can in few words set forth your lordship's manner of arguing. "That the holy ghost proceeds from the "father, we learn," your lordship asserts, "from

* *Parakletos* is a verbal adjective with masculine termination, and is applied in the new testament to two nouns, the one masculine a person, the other neuter or a thing: and by Philo, to a collective noun in the feminine.

" the express authority of St. John, whose words " are, The spirit of truth which proceedeth from " the father; and as Christ in the same verse " says, I will send the spirit, and St. Paul tells " the Galatians that god hath sent forth the " spirit of his son into their hearts, we infer that " the spirit proceeds from the son also: and in- " deed the union between the father and the " son is such, that we cannot conceive how the " spirit can proceed from the one without at the " same time proceeding from the other*." We all allow, that this spirit, whatever it is, proceedeth from the father; a stone proceedeth out of my hands, when I throw it, and this spirit proceeding from the father may be sent in a peculiar direction by another. And here, my lord, you have forgotten to quote the passage accurately: Christ does not say merely the spirit of truth, which I will send—but, the spirit of truth which I will send from the father, and hence the greek church has made a proper distinction—the spirit proceedeth from the father, and, is sent by the son. A servant in a gentleman's house is going on a message to the neighbouring country town: the master tells me of it at breakfast, and I give him a commission to execute; or wishing a message to be delivered in the neighbourhood I beg the master to send his man with it. On stating the transaction aft-

* Vol. II. 175.

erwards I might say, I sent the servant to you, I sent the servant from the master to you, or I begged the master to send the servant to you. In exactly the same manner Christ expresses himself respecting this spirit before it is sent: I will pray the father to send it, or I will send it from the father. In both cases the father is the sender of the spirit: and it is sent through the intercession of the son, just as the servant was sent on my message from my intercession with the master. This instance will explain to your lordship, "how the spirit can proceed from the "one, the father, without at the same time pro-"ceeding from the other, the son." It is from the union between the father and the son, that the spirit proceeded at all from the latter: it is from the union between myself and the master of the house above alluded to, that his servant goes on my message. The procession in both cases is perfectly intelligible. Yet you overlooked, my lord, this easy manner of getting over your difficulties, when you were writing your book, for you observe with great gravity: "We must acknowledge that the procession of "the holy ghost, although to be believed as be-"ing asserted in scripture, is far beyond our "comprehension; and in subjects of this kind "we cannot be too cautious and diffident "in what we say or think*." I agree with

* Vol. II. 175.

you entirely, my lord, in the last clause of this sentence, and on this account I wish your lordship to reconsider the whole, that you have advanced on the procession of the spirit. You have not as yet given any proof, that the holy spirit is one of the three persons in the trinity, and yet you say that his or its procession is to be believed as being asserted in scripture. The question is not, my lord, whether we are to believe in the procession of the spirit, prayed for by our saviour; for of that we have no doubt from its appearance on the day of pentecost: but we cannot allow, that the spirit, which on this remarkable day invigorated the apostles, was one of the three persons in the trinity; because there is no ground for such a belief in the holy scripture.

The limits of my correspondence do not permit me to examine every passage produced by your lordship in favour separately of the divinity of the holy ghost: it may suffice to observe, that they all rest on the passages quoted by your lordship from John's gospel, which completely refutes your argument. One passage perhaps deserves a little more notice, in which the holy spirit is said to lead the disciples into all the truth*, but the remaining part of the verse prevents any improper conclusion to be drawn from it: For

* John xvi. 13.

he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak and shall tell to you things to come. Now had this holy spirit been one of the three persons of the trinity, could he be the passive agent represented by St. John, who is sent, who speaks nothing of himself, but delivers what has been previously communicated to him? Hence, my lord, whatever proofs there may be of a holy ghost being one person, in the trinity, they cannot be derived from John's gospel: and as all your attempts at this proof depend on this gospel, we must expect from your lordship some better arguments, before we allow the holy ghost to be one of the trinity.

The conclusion of your lordship's chapter on this subject paves the way for a better knowledge of the holy ghost or holy spirit: for you make a concession on the use of these terms, by which they sometimes are made to denote a quality and not a person. "When we "consider," you remark, "the mysterious "union of the three persons in one god, which "certainly implies unity of will and power, it "appears to me we may safely grant, that ex-"pressions of this sort are sometimes used to "signify an attribute, an energy, operation, "quality or power of god without injury to the "doctrine we maintain, which is clearly esta-

"blished by so many passages in scripture*." I respect your lordship's candour, and shall not I hope be esteemed presumptuous, in requesting your lordship to note down in the next edition of your work those passages of scripture, in which the spirit is used to signify only an attribute, an energy, operation, quality, or power of god. By referring to these passages, we may place this much agitated question in a clearer point of view: we shall see in what we agree and in what we differ: we shall be enabled to distinguish the chaff from the wheat: we shall understand what grounds there are for believing, that the holy spirit is one of the three persons in the trinity.

With great respect I remain, &c.

* Vol. II. p. 186, 187.

LETTER XVIII.

A verse in the english bible spurious—hopes that the bishop will continue the examination of the scriptures.

MY LORD,

I HAVE read over with a considerable degree of attention your arguments in favour of the trinity, and the divinity of Christ and the holy spirit: and, if your lordship cannot produce better grounds for your positions, the belief in a trinity must be given up, our saviour must be acknowledged to be a created being, and the holy spirit to be merely a quality communicated to the believers in the gospel. My observations may perhaps induce your lordship to recur again to the scriptures: and you will I fear be blamed in some degree for rejecting an auxiliary, which has for a long time created a considerable diversion to the enemy. The three, that bear record in heaven, are no longer enrolled under your standard: they are left with good reason to the evangelical preachers, who for many sundays to come will not fail to stun their audience

with this egregious interpolation. I honour you, my lord, for your ingenuousness: for, if the first scholar of the age had completely rooted out from the minds of the learned every prejudice in favour of the spurious passage in John's epistles, it never was rejected, I believe, by a bishop of the church of England, till your lordship made in so honourable a manner the following declaration.

"I purposely omit the contested passage in "the first epistle of St. John; There are three "that bear record in heaven, the father, the "son, and the holy ghost: and these three are "one. In any case it would be improper to "produce a doubtful text in support of so im-"portant a doctrine as that of the trinity; but "I must own, that after an attentive considera-"tion of the controversy relative to that passage, "I am convinced that it is spurious*."

Your lordship in my opinion loses nothing by the concession. The greek church believed for many ages in the trinity as firmly as the church of Rome, and yet this verse was not to be seen in the greek testaments. Besides, how childish it is to attempt the support of a doctrine like that of the trinity on so evidently weak a foundation! There are three, says the pretended

* Vol. II. p. 90.

text, that bear record in heaven; and so they may, but from bearing record they do not each become god. But I say no more on this subject. At the close of the eighteenth century the spuriousness of this text was acknowledged by your lordship: and I entertain some hopes, that now in the nineteenth century our bibles will be freed from so disgraceful an interpolation.

Indeed, my lord, I cannot too strongly recommend to your clergy to follow the example thus set them by your lordship. You have in one instance corrected the vulgar translation of the bible, in another you have shewn, that a verse read in the churches and much preached upon is no part of holy writ. Continue, my lord, as you have begun. Compare the vulgar translation with the original in both languages, and you will find it abounding in errours, which arose partly from the ignorance, partly from the prejudices of the translaters, and in several instances from the improper rules laid down for their translations. Since king James's bible was published, the knowledge of the hebrew language has been much cultivated, manuscripts of both testaments have been collated, the text has been rectified, and England can boast of a sufficient number of persons willing and able to co-operate in the useful task of making the english bible correspond with its original. The

present translation should be the basis of their labours, from which it should be the law never to swerve, unless for the sake of necessary correction or greater perspicuity. But I am not certain, that such a work could succeed if undertaken by authority. Individuals, unrestrained by the fetters of either church or state, will perhaps be the best qualified to do justice to the sacred volumes: and there may be found disinterested persons now as at the reformation willing to defray the expenses of such a publication. Till this time arrives, my lord, you will I trust encourage your clergy to study the scriptures in their original languages, to rectify the translations in their pulpits and at their reading-desks: and the very laudable steps taken by your lordship, to prevent ignorant and illiterate people from receiving the imposition of your hands at ordination, will I hope secure to your diocese a clergy, not to be frightened at a translation differing from that established by authority, or at the rejection of a passage, which they inadvertently have taken for the words of an inspired writer.

I remain with great respect, &c.

LETTER XIX.

Predestination—newspaper heresy—mother and babe—bishop's babes—the women puzzled—suspicion of episcopal heresy—author's opinion on the five points.

MY LORD,

I HAVE intruded considerably on your lordship's time, and many copious subjects still remain to be discussed. Original or birth sin, grace, free will, predestination and election! What folios rise to my view! what disputes! what rancour! what bloodshed! I, who believe as firmly in predestination as the stoick or the calvinist, scarcely venture to express my opinion lest thousands should on an instant exclaim, that the most horrid torments are predestined for such a believer. Idle silly mortals! can ye not find better reasons for your quarrels? The stoic believed, that every thing, as it happened, was decreed by fate; and I should agree with him, if instead of the word fate he had been acquainted with and could have used providence. Every event, every occurrence in life, whether it regards individuals or collective bodies of men,

appears to me to have been foreknown and fore-determined by the great disposer of all events ages before they took place: and the events, which perplex most the human mind are by supreme wisdom made productive of the greatest good to his creatures. Thus, my lord, though I cannot foresee all the consequences of the French revolution, I see enough to glorify the dispensations of providence in that event. The almighty made use of the most contemptible insects to humble the pride of Pharaoh: famine, faction, fire and the sword of the enemy were the instruments of his wrath against the devoted walls of Jerusalem: when the axe was laid to the root of an antient monarchy, priesthood and nobility, they all concurred in giving strength to the feeble arm, which was to level their usurped powers with the dust. The philosopher and the statesman busy themselves, the one in discovering the causes of, the other in endeavouring to derive some petty interest from these disasters; how few are engaged in tracing the connection between such events and the higher destinies of the human race! how few break out with the prophet, when they see these evident marks of divine interference; Verily, there is a god, who judgeth the earth! It ought to be a satisfaction to us, that every thing is predestined: for he, who predestinates, is the author of all good; he is incapable of ordaining or permitting a calamity to

take place for merely malevolent purposes; he, who suffered the best of the human race to fall a sacrifice to his most malignant adversaries, ordained, that their malice should terminate in general good and in the triumph of the persecuted. The great truth is sufficient: but idle mortals will not be contented, unless they can satisfy themselves on some curious questions, relating to the fate of their fellow creatures after this life, and reconcile the thoughts of the supreme with their free will or the silly conceptions of their own minds. Idle mortals! shall not the judge of all the earth do right? What are these questions to him, whose faith is in Jesus: who looks to the scriptures to guide him into all the truth: who wishes not to make them handles for the petty regulations of sects and the quibblings of divines and philosophers!

An equally disputed topick, which also the church of England has chosen to insert in its articles, is by her termed original or birth sin, by others the sin of being born. We will not contend for the propriety of either definition: the question asked by many persons is of more importance. Is there such a sin, and in what does it consist? An unfortunate prejudice hangs over this enquiry: vulgar language is imperfect, and this very morning, my lord, the newspaper takes upon itself without ceremony or apology to in-

sinuate, that the church of England is in the wrong. I read, that "a poor little innocent just "born was found dead." Poor little innocent indeed! who gave the editer license to use such an appellation? Poor he might call it if he pleased; and miserable, no one would object: but innocent cannot be allowed. Did not this "little innocent," as it is called, who never spoke one word good or bad, come so infected into the world as to deserve god's wrath and damnation? How then can it be called innocent! I remember a most amiable mother * bringing to me once with delight in her eyes a charming infant to kiss. Take the little innocent, she says, into your arms. Innocent indeed! I replied: how can you talk to me in such a manner! Only look at it, dont you see what a vile creature it is? Is it not full of corruption, and deserving god's wrath and damnation? The big tear stood in the mother's eye: it was in vain that I quoted St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Calvin, and a thousand other of the greatest men, that ever lived. She treated them all as a pack of fools, and insisted upon it, that they never had any little dears of their own, and in short that they knew nothing of the matter. Nay, I was compelled to take the little vessel of god's wrath and damnation into my arms, to kiss it, and play

* The lady is a clergyman's wife and the mother of several children.

with it; and then the mother prattled ten thousand things to her lamb, her innocent, her sweet babe, that I protest, my lord, she seemed to excell all the fathers in eloquence, and the feelings of nature got the better for the moment of their sanctity, their piety, and their profound erudition.

The women, my lord, are all against us. What joy there is among them when a man-child is brought into the world! It is their hour of triumph: and in my mind a greater triumph than that of the hero's, who is so anxious to send out of the world the vessels of god's wrath and damnation. See too with what rapture the father looks upon the pledge of mutual affection! Astonishing! both parents believe the infant to be a vessel of god's wrath and damnation! Nay, my lord, I cannot but figure to myself the moments, when Mrs. Pretyman presented even to your lordship those, I was going to say, innocent babes, who now grown up to be fine boys enliven the eyes of both their parents. What delicious moments they were! the greater the raptures, the greater the triumph of faith over feeling!

Is it not extraordinary also, my lord, that the heads of the church should thus contribute to stagger the faith of the women: so that in spite of every thing, that can be said to the contrary,

each thinks its own little dear the sweetest innocent that ever came into the world, and the heretical proverb is used every day, as innocent as a new-born babe? What puzzles the ladies still more upon this subject, I mean the ladies who read their bibles, is the blessing of god on the increase of the human race. If this blessing, they say, had been confined to Adam and Eve, their children might after the fall have been at their very birth vessels of god's wrath and damnation: but this blessing is repeated after the fall, and not a single hint was given to Noah and his children of the terrible state of every child, which they should be the means of bringing into the world. Indeed, my lord, this is a knotty point: and I have in vain looked up to your work for assistance. You have pressed into the service Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Irenæus, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen and Augustine. These are hard words, my lord, for the women to pronounce; and really since I offended my charming friend by such uncouth sounds, I would not on this question give a single farthing for their authority.

Are you, my lord, orthodox or heretical upon this point? I will not take upon me to decide, for there are passages in your lordship's account of original sin, which some persons might interpret into a sort of wavering between two opi-

nions, or even lead them to declare that you had swerved from the sound faith, which the church prescribes in its articles. "The difference," your lordship says, "between those, who con-"fine original guilt to a mere liability to death "and sin, and those who extend it to a liability "to punishment is not very material*." Not material, my lord! Is there then no difference between rotting in the cold dank earth and the tortures supposed to be inflicted on a damned spirit for myriads of ages? Your lordship's mode of reasoning also makes the article perfectly superfluous. Christ's death is the propitiation for all sins, and consequently however great the sin may be of being born, and however great god's wrath and damnation, it is of no sort of consequence to the infant, who with all the marks of sin and wrath about him is not concerned either way. Such a mode of reasoning may be right, it renders infant baptism perfectly superfluous: yet it did not enter into the heads of our reformers, and is not to be found in the writings of the early fathers.

Grace and free will and the dispute on faith and works afford ample scope for a few remarks: but I really cannot take the trouble of recollecting the substance of so many dry and

* Vol. II. p. 243.

uninteresting volumes as have passed through my hands on these hackneyed topicks. The impression left by them on my mind I still remember; and, if churches could be brought to the same opinion, there would be less ill will between both collective bodies and individuals. The five points are fit only for disputants in the schools: the disputes about them arise from students bewildered in their closets, and who wish to be wise beyond what is written: and the points themselves ought not to be imposed in any form whatever as an article of faith upon a christian. Perhaps, my lord, on reflection you will find some foundation for the opinion, which I have embraced upon these celebrated points; and remembering the liberty, by which Christ has made us free, will readily concur in giving your vote for the leaving of every man on these points to the scriptures, not to the fallible interpretations of reformers, just emerging from the errours of popery.

I remain with great respect, &c.

LETTER XX.

Heresy! heresy! heresy!—profane swearing a very idle custom—the bishop and the author agree—the church of England point-blank against them both—bishop's violent language against the church—it is safer for one man to steal a horse than for another to look over the hedge.

MY LORD,

NOT many years ago I was in a company when a clergyman gave a toast pretty common in those times, damnation to the dissenters, and the impression made by it upon my mind was similar to that, which the damnation clause in the athanasian creed seems to have made upon your lordship. If a drunken wretch in the streets should call out on either of us as we were passing him——damn your eyes and limbs, we know how to pity him and to lament, that such expressions should bring us into deserved disgrace among foreign nations: but, if a set of men, dressed up in fine robes with wax tapers in their hands, should in a solemn assembly called for that purpose, address an unfortunate individual, who happened not to think as they did;——damn your eyes and limbs, you infa-

mous heretick, infidel, apostate, deist, atheist, a sudden awe seizes the spectaters, they look with horrour on the object of these curses, they think that such a solemn denunciation will produce its effect on the almighty. Strange conceit! The poor wretch in the streets, and these poorer wretches in the church are beheld with an equal eye by the lord of heaven and earth. The god of love will not listen to the curses of human beings, the one drunk with fermented liquor, the others with the ferment of spiritual pride, intolerance, and ambition.

The kingdom of England was for many years treated somewhat in this manner. An old bishop attended by a number of archbishops and bishops was accustomed to lay our country under a solemn curse, and the farce bating its impiety was as amusing as many other farces played by that bishop and his brethren in publick. We see at once the impiety of these curses when levelled against ourselves; but, how common it is to entertain a similar sentiment in our own minds when disguised under less offensive terms! Thus, because the scriptures have said: He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be judged; sects have laid down the terms for this belief and salvation, and whoever differs from them in the articles of their creed is subjected to eternal damnation.

Your lordship is not of this opinion. "We "are not to consider all, who differ from us, as "unworthy of or excluded from the favour of "god*." In this sentiment I heartily concur with your lordship: to his own maker every man standeth or falleth, and there is one judge appointed over all, Jesus our saviour. But, my lord, how are we to reconcile our opinion with that of the church of England. The church says, there are three creeds "which ought tho- "roughly to be received and believed, for they "may be proved by most certain warrants of "holy scripture†." In one of these creeds is a clause which I shall here copy: "This is the "catholick faith, which except a man believe "faithfully, he cannot be saved. Whosoever "will be saved, before all things it is necessary "that he hold the catholick faith, which faith, "except every one do keep whole and unde- "filed, without doubt he shall perish everlast- "ingly‡."

The church of England says, that the above clause "ought to be received and believed for "it may be proved by most certain warrants of "holy scripture." I read your lordship's account of this clause and find, first, that according

* Vol. II. p. 224.

† Art. VIII. of the church of England. Vol. II. p. 217.

‡ Vol. II. p. 222.

to your lordship the "church would have acted "more wisely" in leaving it out. Is this really true? How must the faith then of every churchman in the articles be staggered by an opinion advanced from such high authority? But this is not all! This negative disparagement of the church does not satisfy your lordship: you speak more decidedly on this subject, and absolutely deny, that the athanasian creed can, as the church of England says it may, "be proved "by most certain warrants of holy scripture." For you do not scruple to assert, that "it is ut- "terly repugnant to the attributes of god, and "it cannot be reconciled to our ideas of com- "mon justice, that a person should be consign- "ed to eternal punishment, because he did not "believe certain articles of faith, which were "never proposed to him, or of the truth of "which he was not qualified to judge*." The church, my lord, does not allow of any such distinctions: her words are clear and explicit: "which faith, except every one do keep whole "and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish "everlastingly†."

But, my lord, what shall I say to a still greater attack made upon the church, which affects its discipline as well as its doctrine. These are

* Vol. II. p. 223.

† Athanasian creed. See common-prayer book.

your words: "I cannot but conceive it to be "both unnecessary and presumptuous to say, "that except every one do keep them whole "and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish "everlastingly*." Your lordship thinks it presumptuous to utter these words!!! But the church of England not only says, that these words shall be uttered, but has appointed the days in which they shall be uttered solemnly in all the churches of England. Your lordship much to your honour frequents, and often officiates, I understand, in the parish church adjoining to your palace. What will be the consequence of this your declaration to that parish and indeed to your clergy in general!!! If your lordship should officiate on one of the days appointed for the reading of this clause, and it should be omitted, will not the clergy be encouraged by such an example to garble the liturgy according to their apprehensions of the propriety of its language? If a clergyman officiates before your lordship on that day, and the clause is uttered, how can he presume to enter afterwards into your presence? and, if it is not uttered, how can he reconcile with such a conduct his promise to perform the service of the church as prescribed in its liturgy?

You may remember, my lord, a gentleman,

* Vol. II. p. 222.

who not many years ago was attacked at Cambridge by a cabal there known by the name of the cubicks, under the pretext of "impugning "religion as established by publick authority "within this realm*." You were present at some part of the proceedings against him, which ended in driving him from his studies and raising several of his adversaries to dignities and preferments in the university and church. One article against him was for saying, that the liturgy of the established church "is very far "from the standard of purity in doctrine which "is required in such compositions†." What an unfortunate man he was to be unacquainted at that time with your lordship's sentiments! He might have requested you to answer a few questions, which without doubt would have had some influence on the court.

Question. My lord bishop of Lincoln, did you ever read in the liturgy the following sentence: "Which faith, except every one do "keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he "shall perish everlastingly."

* See an account of the proceedings in the university of Cambridge against William Frend, M. A. Fellow of Jesus College Cambridge, for publishing a pamphlet intitled Peace and Union, &c. published by the defendant. 1793. Robinsons. Page 8.

† Ib. p. 10.

Answer. I have.

Q. Does your lordship think, that this sentence is very far from the standard of purity required in such compositions?

A. I think it both unnecessary and presumptuous to utter such a sentence.

After such a declaration, my lord, is there not a danger that the name of the right reverend George Pretyman, lord bishop of Lincoln, will in the annals of the university descend to posterity as an impugner of the liturgy of the established church?

With all the respect I can entertain for a person, who thinks it unnecessary and presumptuous to utter what the church has ordained to be uttered in her most solemn assemblies,

I remain, &c.

CONCLUSION.

LETTER XXI.

The bishop and the author convicted—can any one be a member of the church of England—wisdom of the articles for christian communion—conclusion.

MY LORD,

IT is time to close our correspondence. In the course of it I have clearly shewn, that we do not either of us agree with the church of England, and consistently with the terms laid down by your lordship we cannot either of us subscribe to its articles. Let your own words testify against us both. If any one "thinks, that he "sees reason to dissent from any of the doc-"trines asserted in them (the articles of the "church) no dread of inconvenience or disap-"pointment should induce him to express his so-"lemn assent to propositions, which in fact he "does not believe *." Dissent in your lordship's estimation from any of the doctrines precludes subscription. It matters not whether the doctrine, which I disbelieve, is considered by your lordship to be of great importance, or the doc-

* Letter I. page 8.

trine, which you disbelieve, is considered by myself to be of little importance, we are not either of us constituted judges of this importance; we cannot either of us conscientiously subscribe to the articles; we are not either of us true members of the church of England.

If then, according to your lordship's account you cannot be assured of "the divine blessing "upon that course of life, to which you have "solemnly devoted yourself *," what is to be done? Must your lordship resign your bishoprick, give up the deanery of St. Paul's, quit your high station in the church? These are serious questions, my lord, and the dilemma, in which you have placed yourself, is a solemn call on your lordship to compare the faith required by the church of England of its members with the terms laid down by our saviour and his apostles for christian communion. But indeed, my lord, you are by no means singular. Let each man be tried by your rules, which are strictly just and true, and it seems to me, I protest, a thing impossible that any individual now in existence can according to that standard be esteemed a member of the church of England. The reason is obvious. The reformers between two and three hundred years ago framed their

* Letter I. page 8.

articles on the generally received opinion of their party in those times: but they required so much to be believed, that unless we ascribe to them wisdom more than human, it was impossible, that their sentiments should stand the test of two hundred years farther experience, a greater improvement in the study of the scriptures, and the decay of those contests in which the early founders of the church were engaged.

For my own part, the more I consider the difficulties, attending the obligation to subscribe in the manner laid down by your lordship several hundred propositions, framed in a time of much unchristian conduct and in the midst of human passions and caprices, the more I am satisfied with the wisdom of the faith required to constitute an individual a member of the church of Christ. Jesus is the Christ, the son of god, the saviour of the world, through whom alone eternal life is to be obtained *. So short an article of faith will not satisfy disputatious mortals! They will prescribe the line, in which every one of their fellow creatures must walk. A deviation from that line is criminal, and the religion of love is converted into faction. Societies, which have faith in the son of god, may differ

* John xx. 31. Acts ix. 20. 1 John i. 7. iv. 9. 15. v. 5. 10 to 14.

in many circumstances relative to their discipline and order: but, if they keep within the limits of scripture, and do not require precision on a vast number of disputable points, they will much sooner harmonize in opinion than those, which take such egregious pains to lay down the law for separation.

Whence is it also that the christian world has been so much disunited, and such occasion of triumph has been given to infidelity? Is it not from pride, from the love of pre-eminence, from the desire of domineering over the servants of god? We complain in the present days of the conspiracy of infidels against our saviour! The conspiracy of a vast body of christians for the greater part of two thousand years has been much more fatal to the cause of truth: and the gallican church, that wretched church, by which so much of the blood of the saints has been shed, lies now prostrate an aweful example of divine retribution on persecuting christians. We must all turn, my lord, to the precepts of the gospel: we must give the infidel liberty to assail us with his arguments, not doubting that we are more than equal to the contest: we must leave to each other the right of examining the scriptures, not doubting that they are of themselves sufficient to lead us into all the truth: if we join

any society of christians, we must examine its terms of communion; and far be it from us to worship with those, who require us to believe, what it is unnecessary and presumptuous to utter.

With great respect I conclude,

My lord,

Your lordship's

affectionate brother in Christ,

WILLIAM FREND.

INNER TEMPLE,
Feb. 8. 1800.

PRINTED BY S. HAMILTON,
Falcon-Court, Fleet-Street, London.

RT
F

Frend, William
Animadversions on the Elements of
Christian theology.

479359

DATE.	NAME OF BORROWER.
23/10/48	Bind dept [illegible]

University of Toronto
Library

DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET

Acme Library Card Pocket
LOWE-MARTIN CO. LIMITED